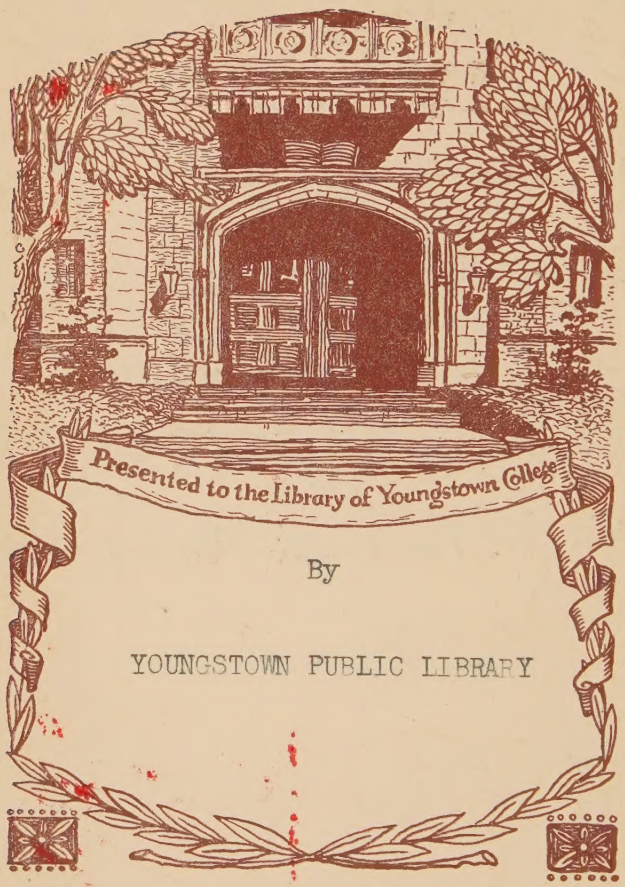
# The Best British Short Stories of 1923

EDWARD J. O'BRIEN — JOHN COURNOS

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# THE BEST BRITISH SHORT STORIES OF 1923

# THE BEST BRITISH SHORT STORIES OF 1923

AND

## YEARBOOK OF THE BRITISH SHORT STORY

EDITED BY

EDWARD J. O'BRIEN
AND
JOHN COURNOS

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We shall be grateful for suggestions from readers of this series, and shall particularly welcome the receipt of stories of merit which appear during the coming year in periodicals that do not come under our regular notice. Such communications may be addressed to *Edward J. O'Brien, Care of Jonathan Cape, 11, Gower Street, London, W. C., England.*

E. J. O.
J. C.

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# INTRODUCTION

## I

Certain critics, as well as individual readers, of the first issue of this series have done us the embarrassing honour of presenting a demand for a set of principles governing the art of the short story.

At first sight this demand would seem to be a legitimate one, seeing that, in making our compilation, my colleague and I have, in the words of a distinguished contemporary, set ourselves up as "self-appointed authorities" on the art of the short story.

To this serious charge, I, for my part, plead guilty, but on good grounds beg to be recommended to mercy. There is the extenuating circumstance which I could put into the inevitable retort: "But can you tell me, sir, of any authority in this profession of Arts and Letters which is not self-appointed?"

After all, my distinguished contemporary, who happens to be a novelist, has, in his excellent books, appointed himself an authority on human nature. One may be sorry that human nature is like that, and no better than he has depicted it, but that is surely not his fault. To decree otherwise would require at least an authority on authorities, but as that also must needs be self-appointed we would not be any nearer to solving the problem of the novelist's truth, accuracy and precision. That is the worst of the standardized existence which this novelist in particular is fond of depicting: standardized life does not appear to make for standards in art.

Limitations imposed upon human nature by the machine have produced curious effects in that the artists, the first to react, have sought escape in a riot of individualism. As often, in times of physical danger, the individual sees prospect of escape in personal initiative, in fending for himself, so in time of social danger the artist instinctively

gropes to save his soul in his own way. Close formations are not to be anticipated when a house is on fire and its occupants are trying to make their escape. They are almost sure to do this through as many doors and windows as are open to them. There may be only one starting point, but many directions of departure.

One man finds escape in presenting pictures of life as antithetic to the life the artist has escaped from as it is possible to attain. This has been called "romantic escape," or "wish fulfilment."

Another finds escape in the act of escape itself. This is not such a paradox as it sounds. It merely means that the artist finds an exhilaration, a joy, in presenting types who are in revolt against the *status quo* imposed upon society by a mechanical order. Such an artist sees the only pleasure of existence in struggle, and makes of this struggle an end in itself.

A third finds escape in acceptance, from which, indeed, the espouser of rebels, just mentioned, is an inevitable reaction. And by acceptance I do not mean the artist's acquiescence in the conditions of life, but quite another thing, his acceptance of them as objective materials for his art. An objective picture need not be less but more potent as a criticism of life, inasmuch as detached truth, free of preconceptions, is the more likely to stir the spectator's, or the reader's, imagination to active participation in the unspoken protest. It was, surely, no accident that Chekhov's appearance synchronized with the introduction of mechanical industrialism in Russia; and it was equally inevitable that Gorky's rebel heroes should follow, barefoot but proud and blatantly bitter, Nietzschean philosophers and supermen "spitting" on life, as the Russian phrase goes. Still Gorky's heroes would possibly never have spat but for Chekhov's characters preceding them, lamb-like, holy and resigned. The meek truly shall inherit the earth, especially in art.

There is another kind of acceptance,—hardly an escape —which, unfortunately, is only too prevalent both in England and America; that is, the pragmatic acceptance, acquiescence in art toward that commercial device known as the law of demand and supply, which covers a multitude of

sins. For such as accept, and conform to this law,—not that, at heart, they believe in the picture,—life is a rosy affair, in which, in the end of things, every hero comes home to roost with his heroine. I said, this was hardly an escape. Certainly not for the author, who obtains his personal escape with the money which such profitable fantasies enable him to earn. On the other hand, it is easily conceivable how such romantic yarns serve as an escape for the standardized multitudes, and how it must be something of a solace to them to know that even a shop-girl can get away with a peer. Art is a drug, even bad art, and it would be folly to be contemptuous of this aspiration in the common man for the "romantic" and the "heroic," however degraded the romantic and the heroic may have become in ratio to the degradation of life itself.

Hence we arrive at the strange paradox: the man who caters to the multitude succeeds only by merging his own personality with it: he does not contrive at his own escape (except in the material sense); while the man who is motivated by a deep, often subconscious desire, or need, to find a spiritual escape, succeeds only at a great price: by differentiating himself from his fellows, or better, by expressing his personality to the full, regardless of his fellows. This individualization, while it has its compensations, has also patent disadvantages, since it implies that there is no real unity in the modern world, and that the artist worthy of the name may produce his finest work only by going against the stream, not with it.

There is something wrong about this, and it was surely not always so. Unity in the arts did once exist. Agathon had an audience of thousands before which to recite a prize lyric poem; today a poet is lucky to get a small roomful. The unity of architecture could be studied in old Florence, but not in new London. The unity of decorative art could have been studied not so long ago in old Japan, but the new mechanized, commercialized Japan appears to be going the way of the western world in its artistic disunity. Dearly has humanity paid for its servitude to the machine. Standardization has established in the arts the law of action and reaction. And so we have at the opposite poles the mechan-

ism of Picasso and the savage abandon of Matisse, the optimism of H. G. Wells in "Men Like Gods" and the utter nihilism of James Joyce in "Ulysses." The Fascisti and the Bolsheviks exist in the arts as in politics, and between them various gradations of personal individual impulses.

Now the whole matter comes down to this. The individual impulses which go toward creating the modern short story are many and various. How, in the face of this obvious disunity, any one can expect a set of principles governing the art of the short story I frankly do not see. To the critic who complained of last year's selection that it had no unity, I can say that in a thoroughly representative collection of modern short stories unity is the last thing possible. As many tendencies exist as there are individuals writing, and as many sets of principles can be noted.

If by principles one means structure, style and technique, then it is possible to say that the writer's point of view, his outlook on life, his manner of escape, all go towards their formulation. It is a truism that if any one has anything to say he will find a way of saying it. There is far more connection between life,—moral or social motivation, hidden though it be,—and an author's artistic principles than is generally admitted. Even "pattern"-making, devoid as it would seem to be of all ulterior purpose, is an escape, perhaps the most desperate, most potent escape of all. Oscar Wilde's profound manifesto, "All art is useless," is only another way of saying that to him all values were useless but that of art. He might have also said, "Love is useless," which would have been equally true and equally valuable. He certainly would have said, "Machines are useful," and they are the less valuable for that. There is high "moral purpose"—hateful phrase, through abuse—in that saying of Wilde's, though its author would have denied it.

In but one great modern literature, the Russian,—possibly because Russia is the one country which has not wholly surrendered to industrialism—is this moral or social purpose evident, giving it a kind of unity. For that reason an effort could feasibly be made to establish some sort of principles which animate all Russian fiction, just as it might be possible to establish the principles which governed Eliza-

bethan drama. The difference between the methods employed by Tolstoy and Garshine, Korolenko and Chekhov, Gorky and Andreyev, Kuprin and Sologub, is not so great that it could not be bridged by some common principle. But how, in heaven's name, is one to apply the same principles to the short stories of Henry James and O. Henry, Rudyard Kipling and Katherine Mansfield, Walter De La Mare and Neil Lyons, George Moore and Ernest Bramah, Jack London and Nathaniel Hawthorne? Shuffle these names as you will, inter-relate them as you choose, the result is the same.

In short, there are as many principles in the art of the short story as there are artists, and to set down the various principles it would be necessary to compile a dictionary of definitions, a sort of Who's Who in the Short Story. My collaborator, Mr. O'Brien, and I may do this in a future issue of this anthology.

The twenty-five stories collected in this volume, from periodicals of one year, will, I think, go a long way toward substantiating my argument. If it is a kind of Noah's Ark in the variety of its contents, it is not for us to apologize. Noah, as the first Anthologist, had his troubles. We have had to chase through the modern jungle for our short stories as Noah for his kangaroo; the right short story was often elusive. And we had to follow the same principle, and get into our Ark the best available of each kind. While congratulating ourselves on what we have managed to get in, it is quite conceivable that, unknown to us, the big whale may be all the time cutting wild and amusing capers on the outside, all around the Ark. But, if reports are true, the whale is a creature that is nowadays extinct or nearly extinct, though, in any event, we strongly suspect that the White specimen, which obsessed Captain Ahab in "Moby Dick," is still subject to pursuit and should be in all ages to come to all prepared to pay Ahab's price.

JOHN COURNOS.

Oxford, June, 1923.

## II

For the benefit of readers unacquainted with the first volume of this series, I repeat here a brief summary of the principles which have governed our choice of stories. We have set ourselves the task of disengaging the essential human qualities in our contemporary fiction which, when chronicled conscientiously by our literary artists, may fairly be called a criticism of life. We are not at all interested in formulæ, and organized criticism at its best would be nothing more than dead criticism, as all dogmatic interpretation of life is always dead. What has interested us, to the exclusion of other things, is the fresh living current which flows through the best British and Irish work, and the psychological and imaginative reality which writers have conferred upon it.

No substance is of importance in fiction, unless it is organic substance, that is to say, substance in which the pulse of life is beating. Inorganic fiction has been our curse in the past, and bids fair to remain so, unless we exercise much greater artistic discrimination than we display at present.

The present record covers the period from July, 1922, to May, 1923, inclusive. During this period we have sought to select from the stories published in British and American periodicals those stories by British and Irish authors which have rendered life imaginatively in organic substance and artistic form. Substance is something achieved by the artist in every creation, rather than something already present, and accordingly a fact or a group of facts in a story only attain substantial embodiment when the artist's power of compelling imaginative persuasion transforms them into a living truth. The first test of a short story, therefore, in any qualitative analysis is to report upon how vitally compelling the writer makes his selected facts or incidents. This test may be conveniently called the test of substance.

But a second test is necessary if the story is to take rank above other stories. The true artist will seek to shape this living substance into the most beautiful and satisfying form, by skillful selection and arrangement of his materials, and by the most direct and appealing presentation of it in portrayal and characterization.

We have recorded here the names of a group of stories which possess, we believe, the distinction of uniting genuine substance and artistic form in a closely woven pattern with such sincerity that they are worthy of being reprinted. If all of these stories were republished, they would not occupy more space than six or seven novels of average length. Our selection of them does not imply the critical belief that they are great stories. A year which produced one great story would be an exceptional one. It is simply to be taken as meaning that we have found the equivalent of six or seven volumes worthy of republication among all the stories published during the period under consideration. In compiling this book we have permitted no personal preference or prejudice to consciously influence our judgment. The general and particular results of our study will be found explained and carefully detailed in the supplementary part of the volume. Mr. Cournos has read the English periodicals, and I have read the American periodicals. We have then compared our judgments.

EDWARD J. O'BRIEN.

# THE BEST BRITISH SHORT STORIES OF 1923

NOTE.— The order in which the stories are published is alphabetical by authors, and is not to be regarded as an indication of relative merit.

# THE SMELL IN THE LIBRARY[1]

By MICHAEL ARLEN

(From *The Sketch*)

## I

ONE night we were at a party, George Tarlyon and I, and there were also present some other people. It was not, however, a good party, and we left it before eleven o'clock. I cannot remember now how it was that one had gone there so early, but it is of no significance. As we passed out, a misguided fellow said it would get better later on, but I extracted him from Tarlyon's teeth, and so out into the street. A long string of cars stretched from the door towards Park Lane, and here and there chauffeurs stood in sombre groups, and we wondered if they thought they were missing anything. The heat of the crowded rooms had put us in a fever, the night air penetrated our flimsy evening-coats, and we shivered and murmured. From the open windows of the house we had left there followed us down the length of Green Street that asinine blare which is the punishment of England for having lost America; and George Tarlyon muttered that there ought to be a law to prevent people from giving fat-headed parties full of crashing bores and plain women, the joints of whose knees cracked in trying any dance which their mothers had not danced before them. I tried to soothe him and myself by saying that parties were not what they were, but he would not be soothed, for he had been given a glass of cider-cup in mistake for champagne, and he who touches cider-cup in

[1] First published as "Red Antony."

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the watches of the night may neither forget nor forgive.

We walked up Park Lane aimlessly, for we knew not what to do nor whither to go. We were further elated by the fact that we could sum up only one cigarette between us.

I suggested that one might do worse than go to bed, but Tarlyon said it was too early for that. "It is never too early," I said morosely, "to go to bed."

"Pah!" said Tarlyon, and so we walked down Park Lane.

Now it is frequently said that Park Lane is full of Jews, but very few met our eyes and they might quite well have been Gentiles. There are many illusions prevalent in the provinces about life in the great metropolis of London: such as (*a*) that it is gay: (*b*) that it is wicked: (*c*) that boys will be boys: (*d*) that there is plenty to do when it rains: (*e*) that you have only to go for a walk to see many "well-dressed women in costly furs"; but the one which has even less foundation in fact than any of these is that, life in a great city being what it is, there is never an hour of the twenty-four when the great streets are not, to a student of life, full of matter for observation. But, as George Tarlyon said, you might be a student of life until you burst and still find no matter for observation—though here we were in Park Lane and the hour not yet eleven!

"The whole thing is a ramp," we said. "Now take this matter about the Jews. We have been distinctly given to understand that this Lane is full of Jews—but what do we see? Two 'buses and a policeman. But that leads to an interesting speculation: can a policeman be a Jew? Has such a thing as a Jewish policeman ever been seen or heard of? And if not, what is it that prevents a policeman from being a Jew? Is the religious feeling among policemen stronger than that among Privy Councillors?"

"Let's ask him," I suggested. The policeman was decorating the corner of Upper Brook Street. Tarlyon asked him, and the policeman said that Vine Street Police Station was not so far off as all that, while as for Marlborough Street, it was even nearer. He wasn't there to be accosted, he wasn't, said the policeman wickedly.

"Ho!" said Tarlyon.

"Good-night, constable," I said hurriedly.

"Good-night, sir," said he—a discreet man.

"Pah!" said Tarlyon.

We walked up Park Lane.

And suddenly Tarlyon gripped my arm, and waved his stick and whispered—

"Look at that! Ralph, just look at that!"

Ten yards or so ahead of us loomed the back of a giant. He was striding on with huge steps, a black cloak was flung about him, and he wore no hat. Maybe it was the cloak, swaying this way and that and one end flapping over a shoulder, that made the man seem taller than he really was— but it was a colossal back.

"It's reminiscent," Tarlyon murmured. "I can't help a feeling about that back—it's reminiscent."

"It's reminiscent," I whispered, "of a back I once lent money to. One hundred pounds it was. . . ."

We quickened our pace. The huge figure passed under the light of a lamp, and the light fell on his bare head, and his hair flamed up like fire.

The huge figure, the arrogant walk, the flaming ginger hair. . . .

"Red Antony!" I murmured.

"And we thought he was dead!" muttered Tarlyon—as though Red Antony could have died without the noise of his death-rattle confounding the thunder of the guns that killed many better men! Could a man who lived so noisily die as other men? And yet, because the lean years of peace had passed without sight or sign of him, we had believed the rumour that had had it that Sir Antony Poole had risen to be sergeant in a Canadian storm battalion and had then died; which had seemed natural in a kind of way, for the worst German shot couldn't, one thought, have consistently missed six-foot-four under a crown of flaming hair.

If there was a man who did not know, or know of, Antony Poole in the careless years before the war, then there must have been something the matter with his eyes or ears. For Red Antony was a famous sight in every crowded place in London, and achieved considerable nonentity as the noisiest and worst-tempered rascal since Fighting Fitzgerald of the Regency. He crashed, did Antony, in

furious idiocy from row to row and roguery to roguery, so that the day inevitably came when no decent man or woman would be seen speaking to the man. Oh, a calamitous pair, the brothers Poole! For one night his brother, the great Sir Roger, brilliant and sardonic Roger, dark and successful Roger, good sportsman and lovable fellow—one night our Roger put a bullet through his head, and at the inquest the amazed world heard that he had done this unbelievable thing because the police were hammering at the door with a warrant for his arrest on a charge of fraud. This we, his friends, did not believe. The police may have been hammering at the door, we said, but the police are notoriously promiscuous about the doors they hammer at. "Fraud be damned in connection with Roger Poole!"—that is what we said. Why, he was fine, that Roger—*fine!* Thus we mourned him, once the wealthiest and wittiest of our company, and we defended his memory against the few who dared impugn it. But the disappearance of the red giant who was now Sir Antony Poole we did not mourn, for from the day of the inquest, at which he broke down and wept like a stricken child, he had not been seen in London until this night in Park Lane.

## II

"Go quietly," Tarlyon restrained me. "We'll learn Red Antony to walk up Park Lane without a hat."

Gently we approached, one on each side of the colossal back.

"Oi!" we cried.

A wrench, and he faced us. We are tall, but we were as children beneath him.

"Oi to you!" snarled Antony. "Who the blazes are you, anyway?" And the great red expanse which was given to Antony for a face surveyed us intolerantly. Never what you might call an easy-tempered man, Red Antony.

"We be friends," said Tarlyon sombrely.

"That's uncommonly original of you," drawled Antony. "I didn't know I had any." And he pretended not to rec-

ognize us—for Antony must always act, always play cussed.

"You haven't," Tarlyon grinned. "But mine was just a manner of speaking." He knew his man; and there passed over Red Antony's face that earthquake and tornado which was given him for a smile and a laugh.

"Hell! Always the same Tarlyon! How are you, George?"

"Monstrous," says George.

"But there is no sensation in matter," boomed Red Antony, crushing his hand.

"And this," said Tarlyon, waving his other towards me, "and this, Sir Antony, is your old friend Ralph Wyndham Trevor, whom you may quite well have forgotten, since you owe him a hundred pounds."

Another earthquake across that vast red expanse, so that I feared for the sleep of those mythical Jews. . . .

"Dear old Trevor—fancy having kept you waiting all this time! Here you are, man, here you are." And from somewhere inside his cloak he jerked a pocket-book into my hand and crushed it against my palm. "You can keep the change, old boy, as you're younger than I am and look as though you need it. Always take vegetables with your meat, Trevor."

"I hate to take money from an impoverished baronet," I got in, just to goad him.

"Impoverished nothing!" he boomed, and swung on Tarlyon, who backed a step. "D'you remember, George, that Roger always said I had a *flair* for making money——"

"But he added," Tarlyon said, "that you hadn't got the brain of a louse to back that *flair* up with."

Boomed Antony: "I have studied the ways of lice for five years on end and must inform you, George, that my brain, though moth-eaten, is certainly superior. I have made mints of money. I am fat with money. I roll in money. . . ." He was working himself up into that state of chronic excitement in which he might twist the lamp-post. Breakable or twistable things had always a fascination for Red Antony.

"There, there!" I soothed him. "And we thought the little man was dead!"

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"There, there!" said George. "Did he make money, now! And we thought he was lying in some forgotten foreign field with a German bullet in his heart."

Bother the man! He simply had to make a noise each time he opened his mouth. The policeman who had talked Vine Street to us approached.

"Dead! Me dead!" And the sweep of his arm flung wide his cloak, and indeed he looked a mighty man of wrath. "As though a Prooshian bullet could kill me!"

"You are no doubt reserved for a more terrible end," said Tarlyon.

Blessed if the man didn't wilt! That roaring red giant —he wilted.

"Don't say that, George," he begged hoarsely. "It's a fool remark to make, that. You didn't mean it, did you?" And he put the question seriously! We gaped at him.

"He was only being funny," I exclaimed. "He tries his best. . . ."

"I wish you well, Antony," said Tarlyon, out of his surprise.

"God, I need it!" Antony growled surprisingly.

And then I laughed—remembering Red Antony's old way of acting cussed, just to surprise and annoy. He'd do anything to make a fool of some one, that man, even if he had to make a fool of himself in doing it. But as I laughed, Antony looked at me with furious, haggard eyes, and I stopped laughing.

I saw Tarlyon looking at him queerly. He knew Antony much better than I did, for many and many a year ago he was a junior subaltern in the mess when Antony threw a bottle at the head of an extremely superior officer. The bottle was full, the aim was true, and Antony was cashiered with all due pomp and dishonour. But, through all his subsequent follies, Tarlyon had liked him. One couldn't, of course, defend Antony; but the very few who had once liked Red Antony always, somehow, went on liking him. There was something about the man, a sort of tremendous gallantry, an air of shameless bravado, a thunder of individuality, which might have made him a simple and lovable giant—but for a grain of rotten subtlety somewhere in him.

Fine timber worm-eaten, Tarlyon said. Not, of course, said Tarlyon, that himself was anything to write home about.

"What's the matter, old Antony?" Tarlyon asked kindly. "You've changed enormously. . . ."

Now I had noticed no particular change, except, perhaps, that handsome Antony looked his forty years and more; but Tarlyon knew him better.

"How have I changed?" snapped Antony. He hated kindness; he thought he was being pitied.

"You look a bit worn, old boy, that's all," said George lightly.

"If it comes to that, you aren't the man you were, what with war, wine, and women!"

"Talking of wine," I thought to say, "one always understood that you'd die of drink, Antony. That's probably what George meant when he said you looked worn."

I wished I had kept my mouth shut. His eyes blazed over me . . . but he restrained himself; and Antony's "restraint" was a portentous business—it made a noise like a fast car with the brakes jammed on.

"Drink!" he said sharply. "I drink nothing to speak of nowadays. There's an end to all things. . . ." Now the lion's bedside manner is a significant thing, and even more significant is it when the lion in the fullness of his strength sways a little, just a little; and what would make Red Antony sway just a little would be enough to put another man under the table, and no dishonour to the strength of his head, either.

"I do not wish," said Antony reasonably, "that you should think me irresponsible through excess of stimulant. The things that are happening to me are not happening through drink, and you must bear that in mind. I am saner than a sane man, though I can hear and see and smell things that a sane man would die of. . . ."

Tarlyon looked at me meaningly. Antony seemed to have forgotten us. Tarlyon took his arm.

"We can't stay here all night," he said. "Let us now leave Park Lane in a body and go to my house. . . ."

Antony woke up; he threw back his head and howled: "Taxi!"

"All right, sir, all right," said the policeman gently. "You don't need to shout like that." That was a brave policeman.

"I insist on shouting," boomed Antony. "Taxi!"

And, thankfully, a taxi appeared from Mount Street, for Red Antony and the police never did mix well. He had once arrested two policemen for loitering and had taken them to Vine Street. . . .

Antony flung open the door. A clock began the lengthy job of striking eleven o'clock.

"We will go to *my* house," said Antony. "I have a charming house, and an appointment to keep in it. Jump in." We jumped in, and we heard him give the driver the address of a house in Regent's Park. How often had we not directed taxis to that house! Tarlyon whistled.

"So you've got Roger's old house!" he murmured.

Antony did not answer. The taxi staggered northwards as best it could.

"I don't see," snapped Antony at last, "why you should gape about it. Getting back to England four months ago, I found the house empty, and took it. It seems natural enough."

"I never said it wasn't," Tarlyon murmured. But he thought it wasn't, and so did I. A brother, on coming back to civilisation after many years' absence, does not immediately leap into the house in which his elder brother blew his brains out. That, at any rate, is how I felt about it.

The taxi twisted through the gates, round the little drive, and to the great door. An odd feeling it was, to stand again in front of that door after nine years—but now we faced a house black and still where once had been a house of shining windows, gay with music and the laughter of the most brilliant company in London. Oh, the Georgians, the magnificent young Georgians—mostly dead!

We told the driver to wait and followed Antony in. We stood still in the pitch-black hall until he should switch on the light, and in the blaze of light in which the cloaked figure faced us I instantly understood what Tarlyon had meant when he said that Antony had "changed." I can only describe the change by saying that the structure of his

face seemed to have fallen into disrepair; its brick-red complexion of old had dwindled to a faint pink, so that one had an idea that any ordinary face would have been a ghastly white; and he looked worn with more than the usual wear of passing years. But the wild eyes were still wild, and uncommonly fine he looked as he faced us in the sombre hall, the huge dandy in the black cloak with the head of flaming hair brushed immaculately back.

He smiled at us with that sudden charm for which women had forgiven him much—too much; he flung out an arm in the grand manner.

"Welcome to the old house," he said. "And for heaven's sake try to look as though you didn't miss Roger."

But the magic of Roger Poole was not, I thought, in the place; the house was now but a shell for a noisy man.

## III

"Champagne is indicated," said Antony; and that indication led us to the dining-room—a long, oak-panelled room at the back of the house. The curtains were not drawn across the two French windows, which gave out to a lawn sloping carelessly down to the water of Regent's Park; and in the second in which Antony fumbled for the electric switch the dark shapes of the trees looked like the van of an impenetrable forest. But dark shapes of trees always look more or less like that.

"Didn't you say something about an appointment?" Tarlyon asked vaguely, as Antony ravished the wire off a bottle.

"Did I?" He looked up at us from his business, very thoughtfully. "Oh, did I?"

"Pop!" said the champagne cork.

We drank, and Antony looked at his wrist-watch.

"Damn!" he said. "It's stopped."

"The time being just 11.25," I helped him.

"Thanks," said Antony, very mild, very thoughtful. "Excuse me a moment, will you?" And he strode across

the room to the folding doors which led to Roger's old library and card-room. He closed the door behind him, but it did not catch, swung open a few inches. No light filled the dark vertical space.

"Never known him so polite before," I muttered.

"He's absent-minded," said Tarlyon, looking thoughtfully at the dark space.

"What I want to know," he whispered, "is what he's doing in there in the dark?"

"Keeping his appointment," I suggested facetiously.

Tarlyon looked from the door to me.

"Poor devil!" he said softly. I thought he was pitying me for my wit, of which I was never very proud.

He put down his empty glass, dug his hands into his pockets, and lounged to the folding-doors. I never knew a man who could walk so casually as Tarlyon; you never expected him to get anywhere, but he always got there before you expected him to.

He kicked the slightly open door a little wider with the tip of his shoe. I was just behind his shoulder.

"Antony!" he called softly.

From the light in which we stood the library was a pit of darkness. Nothing moved in the pit. There was no sound.

"He's not there," I whispered; and I wondered why I whispered.

"Can you smell anything?" a hoarse voice suddenly asked from the darkness.

Tarlyon lounged into the black room. But, somehow, I did not feel called upon to follow. I leant against the door.

Deeply set in the darkness I could at last make out the faintly white patch which must be Antony's shirt-front; and I wondered what tomfoolery he was up to now, asking stupid questions in a startling voice out of a poisonously dark room. I could smell nothing at all, and didn't expect to.

"What kind of a smell?" Tarlyon asked—in a reasonable tone! He stood just within the door, his back to me.

"Can you smell *nothing* at all?" the hoarse, subdued voice asked again. "But, of course, it's very faint now."

Tarlyon put up his nose and sniffed. I sniffed. More than faint it was, I thought.

"Been smoking?" Tarlyon asked, and he sniffed again.

"No," came a whisper.

"Oh," said Tarlyon. This was lunatic talk, and I was just about to say so when Antony asked sharply:

"Why did you ask?"

"I thought I smelt smoke," said Tarlyon. "Might be cigarette smoke,"

"It is," I snapped, for I was smoking a Turkish cigarette just behind his ear.

"You blasted fool!" said Antony—and with such contempt behind it that from being bored I got annoyed. I stretched out my hand on the inside of the library door and switched on the light.

"Turn that out, you fool!" came a frantic roar, and I had a vision of a red giant murdering the distance between us. I've never thanked God for anything so much as for having directed the body of George Tarlyon to be standing between Red Antony and myself. I turned off the light quick enough.

"Steady, Antony, steady!" said Tarlyon.

"Oh, go to hell!" growled Antony.

I thought to myself that we couldn't be very far from it at the moment. But the spell, or smell, it seemed, was broken. I was thankful for that, anyway.

Back in the lighted dining-room Antony emptied his glass; and grinned at me rather shamefacedly.

"Sorry, old boy," he said. I grinned back, as though I had enjoyed it.

Tarlyon asked suddenly:

"Have you got a spare bedroom for me, Antony?"

I stared, Antony stared. Then Antony smiled, and never before had I seen him smile quite like that.

"Thank you, George," he said, almost softly. "Now that's really a friendly action. But I'll be all right—you needn't worry."

Then he addressed me as well; I had never seen Antony so reasonable.

"Come to dinner here to-morrow night," he begged.

"Both of you. I can give you quite a good dinner." He seemed very earnest, looking from one to the other of us. I was going to say I was engaged, but Tarlyon answered quickly:

"Right, Antony." And because he looked at me in a certain way, I let it be.

## IV

In the taxi, at last, Tarlyon said:

"Ralph, you risked your life by turning on that light, but you did a great service."

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't you see anything?"

I then lost my temper.

"No," I shouted. "I neither smelt anything in the dark nor saw anything in the light, except that red lunatic charging at me."

"He was only preserving his illusion," Tarlyon said mildly. "Didn't you see, in that second of light, the open desk just by us, beside the door?"

"I saw nothing but Antony, but quite enough of him."

"Pity. If you had seen the desk, you would have seen a telephone overturned on it, the receiver hanging down, and a revolver on the floor."

This was getting serious. I struck a match and examined Tarlyon's face. He was not smiling.

"Fact," he assured me. "You would have seen the desk just as it was after Roger Poole had shot himself at it."

"You don't mean——"

"I mean, old boy, that Antony has gone and put everything back exactly as he last saw it in Roger's library. Roger, Roger's wife, Antony and another fellow were in the dining-room. The telephone-bell rang in the library and Roger went to answer it, telling Antony to come with him. He didn't turn on the light in the library. The telephone told Roger that the police were after him. And the two in the dining-room heard Roger telling Antony what he thought of him as a man and brother, then they heard a

shot; and when they got to the door and switched on the light, they saw Roger dead at the desk and Antony standing where he was standing to-night. Antony went out by the window into the garden—and he has reconstructed the scene exactly as he last saw it, even to a dummy telephone and a revolver! In fact, everything is there except Roger. Silly, isn't it?"

Silly was not the word. "But why, why?"

"That's what I want to find out," said Tarlyon. "Antony is playing some sort of a game with himself, and he's frightening himself to death in doing it. He always was a superstitious ass. Giants usually are, somehow—perhaps because, having nothing physical to fear, they fear the psychic. I'll bet he goes into that library every night at the same time —Roger shot himself at about twenty-five past eleven, by the way. Poor old Antony!"

"But what was all that nonsense about the smell?" I asked.

Tarlyon did not answer. At last he said:

"Did you ever hear, Ralph, the theory that if Judas Iscariot had not come after Jesus he might have done all that Jesus did? But as he found he could not because he was too late, he was doomed to crime. In a sort of far-fetched way it was the same with Roger and Antony. The tragedy of those two brothers has something absurdly, fantastically logical about it. You see, Roger was a year older and did all that Antony wanted to do, the fine and brilliant things, while poor Antony could do nothing but make a fool of himself, which he did only too well. Antony would have been a man of many accomplishments, for he's no fool, but for the fact that Roger was before him—so Antony thought. And Roger loved Antony, while Antony hated and admired and feared Roger. And at last, somehow or another, he managed to betray Roger. No one knows what that last moment held for those two—no one knows what lay behind the insults that Roger heaped on Antony at that final moment. For they were overheard, you know, by Roger's wife and the man who was dining there. But something seems to have stuck in Antony's mind and grown very big with years. I'm rather concerned

for the poor devil, Ralph. He's still afraid of his elder brother. Or perhaps he feels that Roger left something unsaid which he must hear, and so he wants to recreate him."

It was as the taxi stopped at my door that Tarlyon cried out as though he had made a discovery: "Good God, of course!"

"Of course what?"

"Smoke, you fool! It *was* smoke!"

## V

What was our surprise, on entering the dining-room some minutes after nine o'clock the next evening—for Antony dined late—to see the table laid for four! And then a lady came in—a tall, dark young lady, a strange and unusual lady with a flash of very white teeth for a smile and a gardenia alight on the wing of her sleek black hair! I am afraid Tarlyon and I must have seemed very rude, for we were so surprised that we stared. The white teeth flashed at us. We bowed.

"My wife," said Antony. We bowed again. She was the sort of woman one bowed to. Antony's wife!

"Diavalen," said Antony abruptly, "this is Lord Tarlyon and Mr. Trevor."

Diavalen—Lady Poole!—said nothing. With that wonderful trick of flashing those wonderful teeth she didn't need to say anything.

"She's a Creole," said Antony, as we sat at the table. He said it as he might have said that she was an orange. Those white teeth flashed at me, and I smiled back, feeling an ass. There didn't seem much to say about her being a Creole. . . .

I don't know how Tarlyon felt about it, but it took me some time to get my wind. "My wife," says Antony! Never a word nor a sign about being married—to that glorious, dark, alien creature with the flashing teeth and sleek black hair! Diavalen the Creole! Just like Red

Antony to marry a Creole called Diavalen and then spring her on to you with a "my wife." I remembered Antony once saying, years and years ago: "Never give away gratuitous information, old boy." But there are limits. And one of them is to have a wife with flashing teeth, a gardenia in her hair, and a name like Diavalen, and then throw her in with the soup.

Red Antony was never what you might call a good host: not, particularly, at the beginning of dinner. To-night he was morose. But Tarlyon talked—to Lady Poole. It would take more than a lovely Creole to baffle Tarlyon. He seemed to have inside information as to what were the subjects best calculated to excite interest in a Creole married to a morose English baronet with ginger hair. Diavalen did not talk. But one did not realise that she wasn't talking, for she was wonderfully expressive with her smiling, flashing teeth. She seemed to have discovered the art of using teeth for something besides eating.

As Tarlyon talked to her she turned her face towards him, and of this I took advantage to stare at her face bit by bit. The perfection of that face was a challenge to a right-thinking man. "It is too small," I thought. But it was not too small. "It is too white," I thought. But it was not too white. For quite a long time I could not wrench my eyes away from those flashing teeth and scarlet, curling lips—they fascinated me. Her face was white, the gardenia in her hair looked almost yellow beside the whiteness of Diavalen's face; and I thought to myself that that white complexion was a considerable achievement, for I was sure her skin underneath was faintly, deliciously brown. It was a small face. It was a decoration, enchanting and unreal. And in the decoration were painted in luminous paint two large black eyes; the eyelashes swept over them, often she half closed them—they were very lazy black eyes; and deep in them there was a sheen, as of a reflection of distant fire. I did not like the lady's eyes very much, I don't know why. But as to that sleek black hair in which lay a gardenia like a light in silken darkness—you felt that you simply must run your hand over that hair to see if it was as beautifully sleek and silky as it looked, and you wouldn't

have minded betting that it was. She was the most strangely lovely woman I have ever seen. And she was the most silent.

Even Tarlyon was at last baffled by the silence of Diavalen. A silence fell. The teeth flashed at me, and I was just about to say something to her when Antony's voice hit the drum of my ear and I dropped my fork.

"I shouldn't trouble," said Antony. "She's dumb."

That is why I dropped my fork. The servant picked it up and gave me another. I made a considerable business of it, and then I ate furiously. Red Antony, vile Antony! I didn't look at Tarlyon. He was furious, I knew. He was a man who did not take a very liberal view of jokes like that. But the worst of Antony was that he didn't care what view any one took; he just said the first thing that came into his great red head.

If the dinner (which was excellent as to food and wine) had been a frost before, it was, naturally, not a howling success after that. The only thing to do was to pretend that Antony had not spoken. It seemed too silly to say to the lovely Creole: "Oh, I'm *so* sorry!" Poor Diavalen! But I couldn't pretend, I simply could not find anything to say which didn't need an answer. Just try being suddenly planted with a dumb woman and see if conversation flows naturally from you.

Tarlyon and Antony talked about English heavyweight boxers. Antony was himself a super-heavyweight, and seemed to have a poor opinion of English heavyweights. He wanted to know whether their weight was calculated by the noise they made on being smitten to the ground in the first round. He said that he was tired of opening a newspaper only to read of the domestic history of Famous British Boxers and of seeing photographs of the wives, mothers and children of Famous British Boxers. He said that the whole idea of the press was to impress on the public how gentle, amiable and loving Famous British Boxers were in the home. He pointed out that the whole trouble lay in the fact that Famous British Boxers were too damned gentle, amiable, and loving in the ring. In fact, Antony, having put the lid on his wife, had woken up.

Then, at last, Diavalen rose, and we rose. I rushed to the door and held it open. Her teeth flashed at Tarlyon, and he bowed like a courtier. As she passed Antony, he said, "Good night, Diavalen," but he said it as though he didn't care whether her night was good or bad. As she passed Antony she gave him a look out of her large, black eyes. I was glad I did not know what that look said, but I was sure that Antony deserved it. "Good night, Lady Poole," I said; teeth flashed at me, a touch of pleasant scent hovered faintly, and Diavalen was gone.

"Heavens, she's lovely!" I whispered, as I joined them at the table.

Tarlyon's fingers played with the stem of his port-glass.

"Would you mind explaining, Antony," he asked dangerously, "why you chose that infamous way of telling us that your wife was—well, not quite like the rest of us?" There was, I agreed, something blasphemous about the ghastly word "dumb" in relation to that lovely creature.

Red Antony leant back in his chair and dug his hands deep in his pockets, so that his white shirt-front stuck out like the breast-plate of a warrior. He looked bored.

"Favourite trick of hers," he explained morosely. "Always tries to act as though she wasn't dumb. If you had to live with that silly pretence it would get on your nerves, I can tell you. She does it very well, I admit. Takes a pride in it—making a fool of other people, I call it. On board ship from New York she put it over quite a number of people for a day or two. Lord, it would have got on any one's nerves, the way she grinned and grinned and showed her teeth! Why not be honest and say one's dumb and be done with it? Or let me say it! There's no crime in being dumb, especially with a beautiful face like that. But she won't see it, she must smile and flash her teeth—she's got a repertoire of grins that would astonish a movie star; and she's so proud of them that even if she could speak she wouldn't. And sometimes all that grinning and toothwork gets me so raw that I could put back my head and howl—and she knows it. Sorry I offended you, George. But I'm nervy these days. "I'm raw—*raw!*" He shouted that last word at us with a thump on the table;

and raw he looked, with the eyes blazing out of him, and his once huge, once red, once jolly face shrunk to a mockery of itself, with the skin drawn tight across his jaws and hollow in the cheeks.

Tarlyon picked up a liqueur-glass which the thump had upset. "Sorry about your unhappy marriage, Antony," he said, "But, you know, it takes a Napoleon to marry a beautiful Creole. How did it happen?"

"How?" And Antony laughed; at least he made a noise which was perhaps intended to sound like laughter. "How? Because she made it happen—how else? D'you think because she's dumb that she hasn't got more fascination than a thousand women rolled together? Those eyes? Met eyes like that before, George? If hell has a face its eyes will be like that. I *had* to marry her . . . In Mexico where I went to after the Armistice. I suppose you fellows remember that I went to Mexico three years before the war. I was in love with the girl who became Roger's wife—inevitable, wasn't it, that the only woman I ever loved should fall to Roger? He didn't do it on purpose, of course—it just happened. So I went to Mexico, to try and do something which Roger could not do before me. Last chance kind of thing, you know——" The rain of words faded out of him. He had moved considerably from the subject of Diavalen, but who could hold a haunted face like that to a subject? I wished I could, for I didn't want him to run amok about Roger. There was something—well, indecent, in talking about a man dead nine years or more as though he were alive and still wanting to "put it across" Antony at every turn. I wished Tarlyon would say something, but he was silent, his fingers fiddling with the stem of his port-glass. Antony was drinking next to nothing; round about his coffee-cup were at least six quarter-smoked cigarettes, and now he began to maul a cigar. I never saw him smoke that cigar.

"In Mexico," Antony said softly, "I found oil. It was very good oil, as Roger said later, but there wasn't much of it. My luck again! But I made Roger share it this time. You remember how I reappeared in England? Through that window over there, while Roger was giving a

big dinner-party, sitting where I'm sitting now. You were here, George. Roger and I made it up before the lot of you —after a silence of years. Entirely on my side, the quarrel—Roger always loved me. We made it up, you remember, George? I wanted, you see, to plant Roger with that oil. Cascan Oil—it sounded like a big thing at the time. That was the last big dinner-party Roger ever gave. He was unhappy at home—some love misunderstanding—and he took to me, Roger did. He went head over heels into that bucket-shop. Of course he soon saw through me and my oil—the man wasn't born who could take Roger in—but he let the company go on. He wanted to see how far *I*'d go. Giving me my head, you know. He had packets of money in reserve, and thought he could put the thing right any moment. But he got reckless—watching me and wondering how far I'd go. Roger had always loved me ever since we were children—he never thought of me but as a naughty baby with a bee in my red head about him. I could see all the time he was wondering how far I *dared* go. And he was unhappy at home, poor Roger; he and his wife somehow couldn't get their particular ways of loving each other to work well together. So he had nothing to do but get restless and chuckle over the naughty baby. I went the limit. The bucket-shop crashed on Roger's head. He tried to pull up, chucked his money in, and other people's, but it wouldn't save it. Clear case of dirty work. A greasy bubble, Cascan Oil. Left a nasty mess when it burst. And all the papers signed in Roger's name. Telephone rang in the next room while we were in here. I was sitting where you are, Trevor. Roger looks at me with a kind of crooked smile. 'Come with me,' he says, and I went. Into that room, the library. Roger didn't trouble to switch on the light; the telephone was on the desk beside the door. The police were after him, said the man on the telephone—the police after Sir Roger Poole, Bart., M.P., and all the rest of it! 'Listen,' says Roger. And I listened while he told me a few things about myself. 'A poor husk of a man,' he called me. 'A graveyard of a brother you are,' he said. 'And the epitaph on your grave will be *Dolor Ira*,' he said, for Roger was a great Latin scholar and could lash out bits

of Tacitus as easily as a parson might give you the Bible. I thought he was going to shoot me, I was ready for it—but he'd shot himself. Roger loved me, you know——"

"Then why the hell," Tarlyon blazed out, "did you take this cursed house?"

Antony mauled his cigar.

"Because," he said with a grin, "it just happened that way. It was fate to find it empty—a fine, large house like this at a low rent while all England was yelling for houses. But I might not have taken it if Diavalen had been against it——"

"Oh," said Tarlyon to that.

Antony looked at his wrist-watch, and jumped up in a mighty hurry. "God, the time's gone! Excuse me a moment."

"We will not!" cried Tarlyon, and had his back against the library door almost before you saw him leave the table.

But Antony walked his way to the library door without a word.

"Don't, old Antony, don't!" Tarlyon begged.

"Out of my way!" said Antony. He said it as though he was thinking of something else, which was Antony's most dangerous way of saying anything.

Now Red Antony was a giant, and irresponsible at that. The two of us couldn't have held him from that library door. Tarlyon let him pass with a wicked word, and has regretted it ever since. Antony slammed the door behind him, and we heard the twist of the key.

Without a word to me Tarlyon was at the French window; opened it, and disappeared. I stayed. I was extremely uncomfortable in that mad-house, you understand. Perhaps two minutes passed, perhaps ten. Where the devil was Tarlyon? And then I heard through the library door the thud of something falling. And then in there a window smashed, a sharp smash. I measured my distance from that door and crashed my shoulder at it, and fell into the library on top of the panel.

"Light," said Tarlyon's voice. I switched it on. On the floor between us was a heap of a man face downwards, with

the back of a red head half-screwed under an upstretched arm. And there was red on the back of Tarlyon's hand where he had put it through the window.

We knelt each side of Red Antony, and turned him over.

"Dead," I said.

"Not he!" said Tarlyon. "He's fainted—from fright." But he knew as well as I did that Antony was dead—from fright. The huge bulk was as limp as a half-filled sack as we lifted it a little. Antony's eyes were wide open, and they were like the eyes of a child that has just been thrashed.

"He's been shot," I said suddenly.

"There was no noise," said Tarlyon, but he looked at me. There had been no noise, but there was the faint, acrid taste of pistol-smoke in the air. It's unmistakable, that faint, acrid smell of a revolver just spent. But Antony had not been shot.

"It wasn't an illusion, then!" Tarlyon whispered softly. "That smell . . . of Roger's revolver! And it's killed Antony in the end!"

I stared down at the poor haunted face. And then I heard Tarlyon whisper: "My God!" And again: "My God—look at that!" But I did not look. I knew he was staring over my shoulder, and I was afraid to look. I was afraid of what I would see. And then I twisted my head over my shoulder, towards the far end of the room, where there was a little door from the hall. And I saw the thing sitting squat in the corner, the black thing with white teeth flashing in a white face and a gardenia in her hair. In the palm of one hand was a little golden bowl, and from this bowl floated up a wisp of smoke, just a wisp of smoke against the blackness of her dress, and this was the faint, acrid smell of a spent bullet. And Diavalen was laughing—the dumb woman was laughing with all the glory of ivory teeth and scarlet lips. . . . We left the thing to its joke. We went out by the window, and did not remember our hats and sticks.

# MISS BRACEGIRDLE DOES HER DUTY[1]

By STACY AUMONIER

(From *The Strand Magazine* and *The Pictorial Review*)

"THIS is the room, madame."

"Ah, thank you—thank you."

"Does it appear satisfactory to madame?"

"Oh, yes. Thank you—quite."

"Does madame require anything further?"

"Er—if not too late, may I have a hot bath?"

"*Parfaitement*, madame. The bathroom is at the end of the passage on the left. I will go and prepare it for madame."

"There is one thing more. I have had a very long journey. I am very tired. Will you please see that I am not disturbed in the morning until I ring?"

"Certainly, madame."

Millicent Bracegirdle was speaking the truth—she *was* tired. But then, in the sleepy cathedral town of Easingstoke, from which she came, it was customary for everyone to speak the truth. It was customary, moreover, for everyone to lead simple, self-denying lives—to give up their time to good works and elevating thoughts. One had only to glance at little Miss Bracegirdle to see that in her were epitomized all the virtues and ideals of Easingstoke. Indeed, it was the pursuit of duty which had brought her to the Hôtel de l'Ouest at Bordeaux on this summer's night. She had travelled from Easingstoke to London, then without a break to Dover, crossed that horrid stretch of sea to

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Calais, entrained for Paris, where of necessity she had to spend four hours—a terrifying experience—and then had come on to Bordeaux, arriving at midnight. The reason of this journey being that someone had to come to Bordeaux to meet her young sister-in-law, who was arriving the next day from South America. The sister-in-law was married to a missionary in Paraguay, but the climate not agreeing with her, she was returning to England. Her dear brother, the dean, would have come himself, but the claims on his time were so extensive, the parishioners would miss him so—it was clearly Millicent's duty to go.

She had never been out of England before, and she had a horror of travel, and an ingrained distrust of foreigners. She spoke a little French, sufficient for the purpose of travel and for obtaining any modest necessities, but not sufficient for carrying on any kind of conversation. She did not deplore this latter fact, for she was of opinion that French people were not the kind of people that one would naturally want to have conversation with; broadly speaking, they were not quite "nice," in spite of their ingratiating manners.

She unpacked her valise, placed her things about the room, tried to thrust back the little stabs of home-sickness as she visualized her darling room at the deanery. How strange and hard and unfriendly seemed these foreign hotel bedrooms! No chintz and lavender and photographs of all the dear family, the dean, the nephews and nieces, the interior of the Cathedral during harvest festival; no samplers and needlework or coloured reproductions of the paintings by Marcus Stone. Oh, dear, how foolish she was! What *did* she expect?

She disrobed, and donned a dressing-gown; then, armed with a sponge-bag and towel, she crept timidly down the passage to the bathroom, after closing her bedroom door and turning out the light. The gay bathroom cheered her. She wallowed luxuriously in the hot water, regarding her slim legs with quiet satisfaction. And for the first time since leaving home there came to her a pleasant moment, a sense of enjoyment in her adventure. And after all, it *was* rather an adventure, and her life had been peculiarly devoid of it. What queer lives some people must live, travelling about,

having experiences! How old was she? Not really old—not by any means. Forty-two? Forty-three? She had shut herself up so. She hardly ever regarded the potentialities of age. As the world went, she was a well-preserved woman for her age. A life of self-abnegation, simple living, healthy walking, and fresh air had kept her younger than these hurrying, pampered, city people.

Love? Yes, once when she was a young girl—he was a schoolmaster, a most estimable, kind gentleman. They were never engaged—not actually, but it was a kind of understood thing. For three years it went on, this pleasant understanding and friendship. He was so gentle, so distinguished and considerate. She would have been happy to have continued in this strain for ever. But there was something lacking—Stephen had curious restless lapses. From the physical aspect of marriage she shrank—yes, even with Stephen, who was gentleness and kindness itself. And then, one day—one day he went away, vanished, and never returned. They told her he had married one of the country girls, a girl who used to work in Mrs. Forbes's dairy—not a very nice girl, she feared, one of those fast, pretty, foolish women. Heigho! Well, she had lived that down, destructive as the blow appeared at the time. One lives everything down in time. There is always work, living for others, faith, duty. At the same time she could sympathize with people who found satisfaction in unusual experiences. There would be lots to tell the dear dean when she wrote to him on the morrow: nearly losing her spectacles on the restaurant-car, the amusing remarks of an American child on the train to Paris, the curious food everywhere, nothing simple and plain; the two English ladies at the hotel in Paris who told her about the death of their uncle—the poor man being taken ill on Friday and dying on Sunday afternoon, just before tea-time; the kindness of the hotel proprietor, who had sat up for her; the prettiness of the chambermaid. Oh, yes, everyone was really very kind. The French people, after all, were very nice. She had seen nothing—nothing but what was quite nice and decorous. There would be lots to tell the dean to-morrow.

Her body glowed with the friction of the towel. She again donned her night attire and her thick woolen dressing-gown. She tidied up the bathroom carefully in exactly the same way she was accustomed to do at home; then once more gripped her sponge-bag and towel, and turning out the light she crept down the passage to her room. Entering the room, she switched on the light and shut the door quickly. Then one of those ridiculous things happened, just the kind of thing you would expect to happen in a foreign hotel. The handle of the door came off in her hand. She ejaculated a quiet "Bother!" and sought to replace it with one hand, the other being occupied with the towel and sponge-bag. In doing this she behaved foolishly, for, thrusting the knob carelessly against the steel pin without properly securing it, she only succeeded in pushing the pin farther into the door, and the knob was not adjusted. She uttered another little "Bother!" and put her sponge-bag and towel down on the floor. She then tried to recover the pin with her left hand, but it had gone in too far.

"How very foolish!" she thought. "I shall have to ring for the chambermaid—and perhaps the poor girl has gone to bed."

She turned and faced the room, and suddenly the awful horror was upon her.

*There was a man asleep in her bed!*

The sight of that swarthy face on the pillow, with its black tousled hair and heavy moustache, produced in her the most terrible moment of her life. Her heart nearly stopped. For some seconds she could neither think nor scream, and her first thought was:—

"I mustn't scream!"

She stood there like one paralysed, staring at the man's head and the great curved hunch of his body under the clothes. When she began to think she thought very quickly and all her thoughts worked together. The first vivid realization was that it wasn't the man's fault; it was *her* fault. *She was in the wrong room.* It was the man's room. The rooms were identical, but there were all his things about, his clothes thrown carelessly over chairs, his collar and tie on the wardrobe, his great heavy boots and the strange yellow

trunk. She must get out—somehow, anyhow. She clutched once more at the door, feverishly driving her finger-nails into the hole where the elusive pin had vanished. She tried to force her fingers in the crack and open the door that way, but it was of no avail. She was to all intents and purposes locked in—locked in a bedroom in a strange hotel, alone with a man—a foreigner—a *Frenchman!*

She must think—she must think! She switched off the light. If the light was off he might not wake up. It might give her time to think how to act. It was surprising that he had not awakened. If he *did* wake up, what would he do? How could she explain herself? He wouldn't believe her. No one would believe her. In an English hotel it would be difficult enough, but here, where she wasn't known, where they were all foreigners and consequently antagonistic—merciful heavens!

She *must* get out. Should she wake the man? No, she couldn't do that. He might murder her. He might—oh, it was too awful to contemplate! Should she scream? Ring for the chambermaid? But no; it would be the same thing. People would come rushing. They would find her there in the strange man's bedroom after midnight—she, Millicent Bracegirdle, sister of the Dean of Easingstoke! Easingstoke! Visions of Easingstoke flashed through her alarmed mind. Visions of the news arriving, women whispering around teatables: "Have you heard, my dear? Really, no one would have imagined! Her poor brother! He will, of course, have to resign, you know, my dear. Have a little more cream, my love."

Would they put her in prison? She might be in the room for the purpose of stealing or she might be in the room for the purpose of breaking every one of the ten commandments. There was no explaining it away. She was a ruined woman, suddenly and irretrievably, unless she could open the door. The chimney? Should she climb up the chimney? But where would that lead to? And then she thought of the man pulling her down by the legs when she was already smothered in soot. Any moment he might wake up. She thought she heard the chambermaid going along the passage. If she had wanted to scream, she ought

to have screamed before. The maid would know she had left the bathroom some minutes ago. Was she going to her room?

An abrupt and desperate plan formed in her mind. It was already getting on for one o'clock. The man was probably a quite harmless commercial traveller or business man. He would probably get up about seven or eight o'clock, dress quickly, and go out. She would hide under his bed until he went. Only a matter of a few hours. Men don't look under their beds, although she made a religious practice of doing so herself. When he went he would be sure to open the door all right. The handle would be lying on the floor as though it had dropped off in the night. He would probably ring for the chambermaid, or open it with a penknife. Men are so clever at those things. When he had gone she would creep out and steal back to her room, and then there would be no necessity to give any explanation to anyone. But heavens! what an experience! Once under the white frill of that bed, she would be safe till the morning. In daylight nothing seemed so terrifying. With feline precaution she went down on her hands and knees and crept towards the bed. What a lucky thing there was that broad white frill! She lifted it at the foot of the bed and crept under. There was just sufficient depth to take her slim body. The floor was fortunately carpeted all over, but it seemed very close and dusty. Suppose she coughed or sneezed! Anything might happen. Of course, it would be much more difficult to explain her presence under the bed than to explain her presence just inside the door. She held her breath in suspense. No sound came from above, but under the frill it was difficult to hear anything. It was almost more nerve-racking than hearing everything—listening for signs and portents. This temporary escape, in any case, would give her time to regard the predicament detachedly. Up to the present she had not been able to focus the full significance of her action. She had, in truth, lost her head. She had been like a wild animal, consumed with the sole idea of escape—a mouse or a cat would do this kind of thing—take cover and lie low. If only it hadn't all happened *abroad!*

She tried to frame sentences of explanation in French, but French escaped her. And then they talked so rapidly, these people. They didn't listen. The situation was intolerable. Would she be able to endure a night of it? At present she was not altogether uncomfortable, only stuffy and—very, very frightened. But she had to face six or seven or eight hours of it, and perhaps even then discovery in the end! The minutes flashed by as she turned the matter over and over in her head. There was no solution. She began to wish she had screamed or awakened the man. She saw now that that would have been the wisest and most politic thing to do; but she had allowed ten minutes or a quarter of an hour to elapse from the moment when the chambermaid would know that she had left the bathroom. They would want an explanation of what she had been doing in the man's bedroom all that time. Why hadn't she screamed before?

She lifted the frill an inch or two and listened. She thought she heard the man breathing, but she couldn't be sure. In any case, it gave her more air. She became a little bolder, and thrust her face partly through the frill so that she could breathe freely. She tried to steady her nerves by concentrating on the fact that—well, there it was. She had done it. She must make the best of it. Perhaps it would be all right, after all.

"Of course, I sha'n't sleep," she kept on thinking. "I sha'n't be able to. In any case, it will be safer not to sleep. I must be on the watch."

She set her teeth and waited grimly. Now that she had made up her mind to see the thing through in this manner she felt a little calmer. She almost smiled as she reflected that there would certainly be something to tell the dear dean when she wrote to him to-morrow. How would he take it? Of course he would believe it—he had never doubted a single word that she had uttered in her life—but the story would sound so preposterous. In Easingstoke it would be almost impossible to imagine such an experience. She, Millicent Bracegirdle, spending a night under a strange man's bed in a foreign hotel! What would those women think? Fanny Shields and that garrulous old Mrs. Rus-

bridger? Perhaps—yes, perhaps it would be advisable to tell the dear dean to let the story go no farther. One could hardly expect Mrs. Rusbridger to not make implications—exaggerate. Oh, dear! what were they all doing now? They would all be asleep, everyone in Easingstoke. Her dear brother always retired at 10.15. He would be sleeping calmly and placidly, the sleep of the just—breathing the clear sweet air of Sussex, not this—oh, it *was* stuffy! She felt a great desire to cough. She mustn't do that.

Yes, at 9.30 all the servants were summoned to the library. There was a short service—never more than fifteen minutes; her brother didn't believe in a great deal of ritual—then at ten o'clock cocoa for everyone. At 10.15 bed for everyone. The dear, sweet bedroom, with the narrow white bed, by the side of which she had knelt every night so long as she could remember—even in her dear mother's day—and said her prayers.

Prayers! yes, that was a curious thing. This was the first night in her life experience when she had not said her prayers on retiring. The situation was certainly very peculiar—exceptional, one might call it. God would understand and forgive such a lapse. And yet, after all, why—what was to prevent her saying her prayers? Of course, she couldn't kneel in the proper devotional attitude, that would be a physical impossibility; nevertheless, perhaps her prayers might be just as efficacious—if they came from the heart.

So little Miss Bracegirdle curved her body and placed her hands in a devout attitude in front of her face, and quite inaudibly murmured her prayers under the strange man's bed.

At the end she added, fervently:—

"Please God protect me from the dangers and perils of this night."

Then she lay silent and inert, strangely soothed by the effort of praying.

It began to get very uncomfortable, stuffy, but at the same time draughty, and the floor was getting harder every minute. She changed her position stealthily and controlled

her desire to cough. Her heart was beating rapidly. Over and over again recurred the vivid impression of every little incident and argument that had occurred to her from the moment she left the bathroom. This must, of course, be the room next to her own. So confusing, with perhaps twenty bedrooms all exactly alike on one side of a passage—how was one to remember whether one's number was one hundred and fifteen or one hundred and sixteen? Her mind began to wander idly off into her schooldays. She was always very bad at figures. She disliked Euclid and all those subjects about angles and equations—so unimportant, not leading anywhere. History she liked, and botany, and reading about strange foreign lands, although she had always been too timid to visit them. And the lives of great people, *most* fascinating—Oliver Cromwell, Lord Beaconsfield, Lincoln, Grace Darling—*there* was a heroine for you —General Booth, a great, good man, even if a little vulgar. She remembered dear old Miss Trimmings talking about him one afternoon at the vicar of St. Bride's garden-party. She was *so* amusing. She— *Good heavens!*

*Almost unwittingly Millicent Bracegirdle had emitted a violent sneeze!*

It was finished! For the second time that night she was conscious of her heart nearly stopping. For the second time that night she was so paralysed with fear that her mentality went to pieces. Now she would hear the man get out of bed. He would walk across to the door, switch on the light, and then lift up the frill. She could almost see that fierce moustachioed face glaring at her and growling something in French. Then he would thrust out an arm and drag her out. And then? O God in heaven! what then?

"I shall scream before he does it. Perhaps I had better scream now. If he drags me out he will clap his hand over my mouth. Perhaps chloroform—"

But somehow she could not scream. She was too frightened even for that. She lifted the frill and listened. Was he moving stealthily across the carpet? She thought —no, she couldn't be sure. Anything might be happening. He might strike her from above—with one of those heavy

boots, perhaps. Nothing seemed to be happening, but the suspense was intolerable. She realized now that she hadn't the power to endure a night of it. Anything would be better than this—disgrace, imprisonment, even death. She would crawl out, wake the man, and try to explain as best she could.

She would switch on the light, cough, and say: "Monsieur!"

Then he would start up and stare at her.

Then she would say—what should she say?

"*Pardon, monsieur, mais je*— What on earth was the French for 'I have made a mistake'?

"*J'ai tort. C'est la chambre*—er—incorrect. *Voulez-vous*—er—?"

What was the French for "door-knob," "let me go"?

It didn't matter. She would turn on the light, cough, and trust to luck. If he got out of bed and came towards her, she would scream the hotel down.

The resolution formed, she crawled deliberately out at the foot of the bed. She scrambled hastily towards the door — a perilous journey. In a few seconds the room was flooded with light. She turned towards the bed, coughed, and cried out boldly:—

"Monsieur!"

Then for the third time that night little Miss Bracegirdle's heart all but stopped. In this case the climax of the horror took longer to develop, but when it was reached it clouded the other two experiences into insignificance.

*The man on the bed was dead!*

She had never beheld death before, but one does not mistake death.

She stared at him, bewildered, and repeated almost in a whisper:—

"Monsieur! Monsieur!"

Then she tip-toed towards the bed. The hair and moustache looked extraordinarily black in that grey, wax-like setting. The mouth was slightly open, and the face, which in life might have been vicious and sensual, looked incredibly peaceful and far away. It was as though she were regarding the features of a man across

some vast passage of time, a being who had always been completely remote from mundane preoccupations.

When the full truth came home to her, little Miss Bracegirdle buried her face in her hands and murmured:—

"Poor fellow—poor fellow!"

For the moment her own position seemed an affair of small consequence. She was in the presence of something greater and more all-pervading. Almost instinctively she knelt by the bed and prayed.

For a few moments she seemed to be possessed by an extraordinary calmness and detachment. The burden of her hotel predicament was a gossamer trouble—a silly, trivial, almost comic episode, something that could be explained away.

But this man—he had lived his life, whatever it was like, and now he was in the presence of his Maker. What kind of man had he been?

Her meditations were broken by an abrupt sound. It was that of a pair of heavy boots being thrown down by the door outside. She started, thinking at first it was someone knocking or trying to get in. She heard the "boots," however, stumping away down the corridor, and the realization stabbed her with the truth of her own position. She mustn't stop there. The necessity to get out was even more urgent.

To be found in a strange man's bedroom in the night is bad enough, but to be found in a dead man's bedroom was even worse. They would accuse her of murder, perhaps. Yes, that would be it—how could she possibly explain to these foreigners? Good God! they would hang her. No, guillotine her—that's what they do in France. They would chop her head off with a great steel knife. Merciful heavens! She envisaged herself standing blindfold, by a priest and an executioner in a red cap, like that man in the Dickens story. What was his name? —Sydney Carton, that was it. And before he went on the scaffold he said:—

"It is a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done—"

But no, she couldn't say that. It would be a far, far worse thing that she did. What about the dear dean; her sister-in-law arriving alone from Paraguay to-morrow; all her dear people and friends in Easingstoke; her darling Tony, the large grey tabby-cat? It was her duty not to have her head chopped off if it could possibly be avoided. She could do no good in the room. She could not recall the dead to life. Her only mission was to escape. Any minute people might arrive. The chambermaid, the boots, the manager, the gendarmes. Visions of gendarmes arriving armed with swords and notebooks vitalized her almost exhausted energies. She was a desperate woman. Fortunately now she had not to worry about the light. She sprang once more at the door and tried to force it open with her fingers. The result hurt her and gave her pause. If she was to escape she must *think,* and think intensely. She mustn't do anything rash and silly; she must just think and plan calmly.

She examined the lock carefully. There was no keyhole, but there was a slip-bolt, so that the hotel guest could lock the door on the inside, but it couldn't be locked on the outside. Oh, why didn't this poor dear dead man lock his door last night? Then this trouble could not have happened. She could see the end of the steel pin. It was about half an inch down the hole. If anyone was passing they must surely notice the handle sticking out too far the other side! She drew a hairpin out of her hair and tried to coax the pin back, but she only succeeded in pushing it a little farther in. She felt the colour leaving her face, and a strange feeling of faintness came over her.

She was fighting for her life; she mustn't give way. She darted round the room like an animal in a trap, her mind alert for the slightest crevice of escape. The window had no balcony, and there was a drop of five storeys to the street below. Dawn was breaking. Soon the activities of the hotel and the city would begin. The thing must be accomplished before then.

She went back once more and stared hard at the lock. She stared at the dead man's property, his razors and brushes and writing materials. He appeared to have a

lot of writing materials, pens and pencils and rubber and sealing-wax. Sealing-wax!

Necessity is truly the mother of invention. It is in any case quite certain that Millicent Bracegirdle, who had never invented a thing in her life, would never have evolved the ingenious little device she did, had she not believed that her position was utterly desperate. For in the end this is what she did. She got together a box of matches, a candle, a bar of sealing-wax, and a hairpin. She made a little pool of hot sealing-wax, into which she dipped the end of the hairpin. Collecting a small blob on the end of it, she thrust it into the hole, and let it adhere to the end of the steel pin. At the seventh attempt she got the thing to move.

It took her just an hour and ten minutes to get that steel pin back into the room, and when at length it came far enough through for her to grip it with her finger-nails, she burst into tears through the sheer physical tenseness of the strain. Very, very carefully she pulled it through, and holding it firmly with her left hand she fixed the knob with her right, then slowly turned it.

The door opened!

The temptation to dash out into the corridor and scream with relief was almost irresistible, but she forbore. She listened. She peeped out. No one was about. With beating heart she went out, closing the door inaudibly; she crept like a little mouse to the room next door, stole in, and flung herself on the bed. Immediately she did so, it flashed through her mind that *she had left her sponge-bag and towel in the dead man's room!*

In looking back upon her experience she always considered that that second expedition was the worst of all. She might have left the sponge-bag and towel remain there, only that the towel—she never used hotel towels—had neatly inscribed in the corner "M. B."

With furtive caution she managed to retrace her steps. She re-entered the dead man's room, reclaimed her property, and returned to her own. When the mission was accomplished she was indeed well-nigh spent. She lay

on her bed and groaned feebly. At last she fell into a fevered sleep.

It was eleven o'clock when she awoke, and no one had been to disturb her. The sun was shining, and the experiences of the night appeared a dubious nightmare. Surely she had dreamt it all?

With dread still burning in her heart she rang the bell. After a short interval of time the chambermaid appeared. The girl's eyes were bright with some uncontrollable excitement. No, she had not been dreaming. This girl had heard something.

"Will you bring me some tea, please?"

"Certainly, madame."

The maid drew back the curtains and fussed about the room. She was under a pledge of secrecy, but she could contain herself no longer. Suddenly she approached the bed and whispered, excitedly:—

"Oh, madame, I am promised not to tell—but a terrible thing has happened! A man, a dead man, has been found in room one hundred and seventeen—a guest! Please not to say I tell you. But they have all been here—the gendarmes, the doctors, the inspectors. Oh, it is terrible—terrible!"

The little lady in the bed said nothing. There was indeed nothing to say. But Marie Louise Lancret was too full of emotional excitement to spare her.

"But the terrible thing is— Do you know who he was, madame? They say it is Boldhu, the man wanted for the murder of Jeanne Carreton in the barn at Vincennes. They say he strangled her, and then cut her up in pieces and hid her in two barrels, which he threw into the river. Oh, but he was a bad man, madame, a terrible bad man—and he died in the room next door. Suicide, they think; or was it an attack of the heart? Remorse; some shock, perhaps. Did you say a *café complet,* madame?"

"No, thank you, my dear—just a cup of tea—strong tea."

"*Parfaitement,* madame."

The girl retired, and a little later a waiter entered the room with a tray of tea. She could never get over her

surprise at this. It seemed so—well, indecorous for a man —although only a waiter—to enter a lady's bedroom. There was, no doubt, a great deal in what the dear dean said. They were certainly very peculiar, these French people—they had most peculiar notions. It was not the way they behaved at Easingstoke. She got farther under the sheets, but the waiter appeared quite indifferent to the situation. He put the tray down and retired.

When he had gone, she sat up and sipped her tea, which gradually warmed her. She was glad the sun was shining. She would have to get up soon. They said that her sister-in-law's boat was due to berth at one o'clock. That would give her time to dress comfortably, write to her brother, and then go down to the docks.

Poor man! So he had been a murderer, a man who cut up the bodies of his victims—and she had spent the night in his bedroom! They were certainly a most—how could she describe it?—people. Nevertheless she felt a little glad that at the end she had been there to kneel and pray by his bedside. Probably nobody else had ever done that. It was very difficult to judge people. Something at some time might have gone wrong. He might not have murdered the woman after all. People were often wrongly convicted. She herself. If the police had found her in that room at three o'clock that morning— It is that which takes place in the heart which counts. One learns and learns. Had she not learnt that one can pray just as effectively lying under a bed as kneeling beside it? Poor man!

She washed and dressed herself and walked calmly down to the writing-room. There was no evidence of excitement among the other hotel guests. Probably none of them knew about the tragedy except herself. She went to a writing-table, and after profound meditation wrote as follows:

*My Dear Brother—*

*I arrived late last night, after a very pleasant journey. Everyone was very kind and attentive, the manager was sitting up for me. I nearly lost my spectacles in the*

*restaurant-car, but a kind old gentleman found them and returned them to me. There was a most amusing American child on the train. I will tell you about her on my return. The people are very pleasant, but the food is peculiar, nothing plain and wholesome. I am going down to meet Annie at one o'clock. How have you been keeping, my dear? I hope you have not had any further return of the bronchial attacks. Please tell Lizzie that I remembered in the train on the way here that that large stone jar of marmalade that Mrs. Hunt made is behind those empty tins on the top shelf of the cupboard next to the coach-house. I wonder whether Mrs. Buller was able to come to evensong after all? This is a nice hotel, but I think Annie and I will stay at the Grand to-night, as the bedrooms here are rather noisy. Well, my dear, nothing more till I return. Do take care of yourself.*

*Your loving sister,*

MILLICENT.

Yes, she couldn't tell Peter about it, neither in the letter nor when she went back to him. It was her duty not to tell him. It would only distress him: she felt convinced of it. In this curious foreign atmosphere the thing appeared possible, but in Easingstoke the mere recounting of the fantastic situation would be positively indelicate. There was no escaping that broad general fact—she had spent a night in a strange man's bedroom. Whether he was a gentleman or a criminal, even whether he was dead or alive, did not seem to mitigate the jar upon her sensibilities, or, rather it would not mitigate the jar upon the peculiarly sensitive relationship between her brother and herself. To say that she had been to the bathroom, the knob of the door-handle came off in her hand, she was too frightened to awaken the sleeper or scream, she got under the bed—well, it was all perfectly true. Peter would believe her, but—one simply could not conceive such a situation in Easingstoke deanery. It would create a curious little barrier between them, as though she had been dipped in some mysterious solution which alienated her. It was her duty not to tell.

She put on her hat and went out to post the letter. She distrusted an hotel letter-box. One never knew who handled these letters. It was not a proper official way of treating them. She walked to the head post-office in Bordeaux.

The sun was shining. It was very pleasant walking about amongst these queer, excitable people, so foreign and different looking—and the *cafés* already crowded with chattering men and women; and the flower stalls, and the strange odour of—what was it? salt? brine? charcoal? A military band was playing in the square—very gay and moving. It was all life, and movement, and bustle—thrilling rather.

"I spent a night in a strange man's bedroom."

Little Miss Bracegirdle hunched her shoulders, hummed to herself, and walked faster. She reached the post-office, and found the large metal plate with the slot for letters and R. F. stamped above it. Something official at last! Her face was a little flushed—was it the warmth of the day, or the contact of movement and life?—as she put her letter into the slot. After posting it she put her hand into the slot and flicked it round to see that there were no foreign contraptions to impede its safe delivery. No, the letter had dropped safely in. She sighed contentedly, and walked off in the direction of the docks to meet her sister-in-law from Paraguay.

# A QUEER FELLOW[1]

## By CLIFFORD BAX

(From *The Beacon*)

I HAD come to that season of our life at which we resent no longer the monotony of our days. Three of my friends, too, had died in the space of a twelvemonth, and the closer acquaintance of death had caused me to recognise that youth henceforth was a memory. All manner of trivial incidents began to impress me with the change in my condition. I recall how acutely I realised it anew on a drizzling day of November as I opened a letter from Rosalind Mortlake, whose father had been my frequent companion for the last eight years.

I learned that she was about to abandon the old Manor House in Somerset, where Mortlake and I had spent many a week together, for her brother Jack had invited her to share rooms with him in the North.

"Come if you can," she wrote, "on the day that brings you this letter. The house is half-dismantled, but I can promise you a dry bed and a big fire. The fact is that in sorting out father's papers I have chanced on a box that I do not wish to investigate myself. If you are too busy to come, I will bring it to London, but if you were here you might choose out some roots for your garden. I should like to see them blossoming there."

I sent off a telegram, packed a valise, and betook myself to Paddington, where I secured a corner-seat in a smoking carriage. For an hour of the journey I read an old Hardy novel, but as soon as we touched the border of the West Country I began to look out at the scattered homesteads,

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many of which I recognised with the lulling sorrow of pleasant association: and memories of my lost friend flowed up from an inner depth.

Although he had not been my senior by more than a dozen years he had always appeared to be older than he was. He had given me the impression of a man whose life had been dishevelled by the grief and glory of love, but at least while I had known him Richard Mortlake was remarkable for the apparent equilibrium of his mind. Nevertheless, though his manner was light and genial, his face in repose had an air of profoundest melancholy.

Of his youth he had told me nothing, and it was from Rosalind that I learned one day how her father, as a young man, had gone to the South Seas, had acquired a small fortune there, and finally had invested it profitably in a new line of merchant-ships that traded with China and Siam. He must have been about thirty-one, I supposed, when he came to England, married and began to farm. With the latter part of his life I was well acquainted, for of that he had spoken freely, and I knew that for twenty years he had suffered no great calamity. Not even the death of his wife, when Rosalind was a child of twelve years, had troubled him very deeply, for his marriage had been a mistake.

I wondered, therefore, whether the box of which Rosalind had written might hold an account of some early passion experienced at the other end of the world—love-letters, perhaps, from a girl who had never become his wife. Two or three of them Rosalind had probably read, but had then desisted from a fine respect for the soul of a man whom she had loved so much.

By four in the afternoon, having changed at Yeovil, I arrived at the station of a market-town that lay some three miles by road from the ancient house. I was met by young Riley, the gardener, who explained that he had driven down in the dogcart because the automobile was in bad repair. Miss Rosalind, he said, was extremely sorry to send me an uncovered conveyance on a day so miserable, but she had directed him to give me a suit of oil-skins—a suit that I recognised a little sadly.

The full darkness of a winter's evening had gathered about us when at last we emerged from the lanes to the open green and could see the lamp-light in the mullioned windows of the Manor House. Very loving was the welcome with which Rosalind received me, and I remember how I thought, with a kind of shame, that sorrow had increased her quiet and serious beauty. We passed through the hall, now dreary with packing-cases, and entered the music-room, where a table was bright with tea things and the Persian cat luxuriated in the orange glow of the open fireplace. I was glad to find that Rosalind was not lingering in the house alone. A girl with spectacles, whose name I could not recall but whose wit I remembered well, sat close to the painted spinet with a small heap of blue sewing-work on her knees.

It was not until after supper that Rosalind gave me the box containing her father's papers. "I have read these two," she said softly, "but none of the others. Perhaps you will know to whom it is they refer; for you see the sentence here on the top of the packet. If it weren't for that, I should certainly destroy them. I have had to destroy so much." And then, with a smile and a reference to old times, she gave me a tin of the smoking mixture that she knew I affected, for fear that I might have omitted to pack my own.

Remembering the hands which had tied them together, I fingered the contents of the box with a chill of ancestral awe. There was comfort in the presence of the two girls, who murmured to one another as they stitched, for I knew how cheerless my thoughts would soon have become had I sat there alone with such a task.

Richard Mortlake had written on a slip of blue paper: "This packet is not to be opened till its subject is rid of the world." I assumed at first that the phrase must apply to himself, but after examining the two pages that Rosalind had put apart I was forced to another conclusion. "Ah, what beauty you had—" such were the words that I found on the first of these— "what beauty you had in the years that are now as dead as the days of Antinous or of Sappho! Now that I know the coarse character of

the world you seem to me like a strayed spirit from a planet where beauty is the element in which all things live. I did not love you enough. I could not love you enough. My God, if I had but known you as the others knew you out there!"

On the second page, in the midst of much written reverie, I remarked the words: "We were too near, too near. What would I give could I see you now as I saw you in those dead summers! All the grace of a Grecian statue, all the ardour of a painting by Giorgione, all the passionate aspiration of a Buddhist saint—all these were yours, and they faded out, and you left me, and now you shall never again be seen in the world!"

I folded the pages and put them down on a chair beside me. It was clear that the lines had been written some two or three years before. It was therefore probable that their "subject" was not yet "rid of the world." I wondered if Mortlake might have meant her to read them, and having unfastened the packet I read through the papers rapidly with a hope that I might discover at least her name. In consequence I was greatly bewildered when I came across the following passages: "I am glad we shall never meet. I am glad that you cannot see me as I have become. You were so gay and inventive: I am so dull. You were agile, slender and fair, but I am like a woodcut of Melancholy, with a seared and sunken face and a ragged beard. You wanted me to become a famous painter, and here I am—a gentleman-farmer obscurely packed away in a corner of that England which you despised as a country that had no soul. Would you laugh at me? No, no, no; you were much too gentle. You were gentle as a girl—indeed, in your beauty there was much of a girl's charm. . . ."

"Do you remember that love-affair in Rangoon? What a fool the girl was—and how little we thought so then! I took out your photograph just now, when the household had gone to their beds, and all the old agony has overcome me again. I can't see the value of living when the petals of youth have broken. And to think that you made yourself so wretched for the sake of that little

religious fanatic—you, you that were like a deep bowl brimmed up with the wine of the Gods!"

"This evening, when the midsummer stars came out, I remembered the night when you first swam out on the burning billows of love. . . ."

"I wish you were here as my son. Now and again this afternoon as Rosalind was playing tennis in the garden, there was something about her movements and her eyes that made her resemble you almost too closely. I wonder if she would have loved you. But you are dead, dead, dead!"

At this point I began to wonder again who the subject of so much wistful lamentation might have been. I must have slipped for a few moments from the present into the past, for I was startled when Rosalind asked me whether I should be disturbed if she played some music. The question was put from a habit of courtesy, for she knew me well enough to be sure of my answer; and accordingly, when I lifted the last papers from the box, I could hear the sweet opening of an Elizabethan melody to which the stout walls of the room seemed listening almost thirstily.

"What would they think of me?" I read at the foot of a foolscap sheet, "what would they think of me if they knew my secret—all these pleasant and orderly people with whom I do business or with whom I pass the time? No doubt they would think me mad,—morbid, at least. I suppose I am. Or have other men, also, strange crannies in their souls? Me they account sane enough—but I know them, I know them too well. If they learnt of this they would think it a fine joke. They shall never pierce to my heart." On the last page of all I found these words: "Beautiful youth, it is folly to stab my spirit with memories of what you were. I have sealed your picture away, and henceforth I will never unseal it.—R. M."

I drew out the sealed photograph and paused for a little before I cut through the twine that held it, imagining the hour in which Mortlake had tried to bury his grief, and wondering would it be kinder to burn the portrait unseen. When at length I had opened the covering paper I beheld the face of a lad whose beauty was so vivid and so mental

that it seemed hardly human. The face was that of a spirit; and although in reality it was neither effeminate nor manly those who are crude in their estimates of life might have called it a little too girlish, for the look in the eyes and the meaning of the mouth were sensitive and compassionate. Indeed, it was plain that this boy had been cursed or blessed with extreme sensibility to the beauty and the anguish of earth. I could see at a glance the evidence of a swift and luminous intellect which must have preserved its owner from the contempt that the world would otherwise have shown to a nature so unusual.

As I gazed at the picture I became aware of certain inner expressions which at first had escaped me, and I understood how Mortlake had remarked a resemblance between Rosalind and the boy whom he lamented. I turned over the picture and found on the back of it, written in faded ink, "Done when I got to London. Do you think it is like me?—R. M."

Poor Mortlake, I thought—then *that* was the secret you locked away! You were in love with yourself, unhappy Narcissus—in love with your own youth, with all that you once were, with all the pathetic enthusiasms of the past! You were right—they would laugh at you, my friend; but you know that I shall not deride. That boy had beauty and youth at their highest, and perhaps in sighing over your vanished self you were sorrowing for all the lost loveliness of the world.

On the following day, though I burnt the papers, I preserved the photograph and gave it to Rosalind. The weather had cleared, and we went into the garden, and I chose out some roots that my friend, perhaps, had planted there in the spring.

# MELANCHOLY ADVENTURE[1]

By D. F. BOYD

(From *The Manchester Guardian*)

"AN adventure?" the doctor said. "Scarcely that." I was returning late from Fortune's house, far in the suburbs. Fortune lives in some new genteel streets of red brick just a little beyond the belt of big Gothic houses built about eighty years ago. The streets were quite empty; it was a quarter-past two. I was surprised, therefore, to see a woman leaning over one of those big gates with spikes on the top. So far as I could make out she was in some distress. I hesitated to address her, but I spoke. She looked towards me from under the heavy shade of the trees for a full minute and answered that I could do nothing. Then she seemed to hesitate, and as I took a few steps away on the pavement she followed me.

We walked on silently for so long that I found the silence oppressive. I had to say something. Perhaps fatigue made me nervous. I talked about anything I could—the weather, the scarlet of the pillar-boxes, and early bedding out. I began almost to think aloud, remarking, I remember, how in our progress along the white pavements we were darkening with our shadows the shadowed limbs of the trees. Into the lengthy stream of this nonsense she dropped a sound which alarmed me. I turned to look and saw her eyes were streaming with tears. She must have been crying silently all the way. I was too ashamed to say another word, and we walked on as before, in silence, I wondering how far her home might be. We met one policeman, I remember, for I was pre-

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paring to tell him, if he should speak to us, that we had come from the house of a relation who was dying. I thought that maybe it was true. Soon after that she spoke to me in a clear, precise voice as impersonal as an automatic machine. There was not a trace of emotion in her voice—only tiredness.

"In that house," she said, as though we had just left the gate, "there is a man that I love." I was very grateful that she waited for no reply, but went straight on.

"What would you do if you loved a man who once said he loved you, and then, in a little, you found he didn't? If you had felt so keenly that you had put everything on it—everything you had, happiness, honour, love of parents, friends, money, religion?"

"Are you sure of it?" I asked diffidently, with long delay. She did not answer that. We went on walking, and I saw we were approaching Fortune's district. We must have turned the park and circled back. The stars were already growing pale. Then—"Do people really believe in a God?" she asked. I told her, Yes, that many really did. "But does it make any difference?" I said that sometimes their belief made them suffer pain more hardily. "Ah! pain! But I don't believe. I don't believe in anything. In any case, what's the use in suffering pain hardily?" I could not answer that. As I puzzled over it, dismayed at the infinite distance of another person's suffering, I noticed how the roofs were rising blacker in the morning. A light was still—or already—burning in an open window. I wondered again where and when we should halt; she was becoming exhausted, and she nearly dragged her feet on the pavement.

Suddenly she stopped and turned into a gateway. The smell of the summer morning was in the air.

"Why," I exclaimed, "this is the gate, the same gate! You're not going to stop here? Didn't you tell me—about the man, I mean? Won't you go home?" She turned her head away, and said very quietly:

"It is my husband's house."

She could have been no more than one-and-twenty.

# THE MOLE[1]

By GERALD BULLETT

(From *The London Mercury*)

## I

CONVERSATION turned inevitably to the local tragedy that was agitating all the village. The little general store, the only shop the place boasted and a poor thing at that, had been burned down in the night, and nothing remained but the heap of ruins from which, not many hours since, two charred corpses had been removed. Our chessmen stood in battle array, ready for action, but unnoticed by either of us. Something in Saunders's manner held my attention. Sceptic though I am, I have always found him interesting. He pays me the compliment of divesting himself of his rectorship when he visits me, and it has flattered my vanity to believe that I see a side of him that is for ever hidden from those of his parishioners who assemble Sunday by Sunday to receive from him their spiritual ration. And I was the more intrigued because I divined depths in him still to be explored.

Perhaps I am over-fanciful, said Saunders, edging his chair nearer to the fire; but it had always seemed to me that there was more in their marriage than the mere female domination so obvious to everyone. And when poor Gubbins came to me last winter, with the story that I'm going to tell you, my guess was confirmed. Mrs. Gubbins wore the breeches—a vulgar phrase for a vulgar thing—but that wasn't all. I shall never forget my first visit to her shop.

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You've seen the woman scores of times, but I'll tell you the impression she made on me. Her face was leather; her nose was pinched and pitiless; her eyes—did you ever notice her eyes? You'd expect her to possess the malignant dominating eyes of the shrew. No such thing. Mrs. Gubbins's eyes resembled those of a mask, or of a corpse; they were fixed, so it seemed to me, in a cold, everlasting, fishy scrutiny of a drab world. If they were the windows of her soul, they were windows made of frosted glass. Looking at those eyes, I seemed to see vacuity behind them. Looking again, I surmised a soul indeed, but a damned soul. A professional prejudice, perhaps, that you won't sympathise with. But it was not her eyes that most disturbed me. I have seen a variety of unpleasant eyes. But I have never seen on any human being so ugly a mole as was on that woman's chin. It was about the size of a pea, and growing from it were three longish black whiskers. The thing looked positively feline. It became for me, as soon as I caught sight of it, her most significant feature. And that, too, proved a good guess.

I had gone to the shop ostensibly to buy a cake of soap, but really in the hope of catching a glimpse of a human soul, of two human souls. I had heard queer accounts of this couple, and I was curious.

"A cake of soap, please, Mrs. Gubbins." I was then a stranger to her, as to most of the village, but my use of her name evoked no sign of life in those glassy eyes of hers. She turned to her husband, that mild little man with dreaming eyes and a trim beard who looked just what he was, a lay preacher with a touch of fanaticism and a taste for fantastic prophecy. He was sitting at the back of the shop on a case of sugar, or something of the kind, engrossed in reading his pocket Bible.

"Run along," said Mrs. Gubbins, in her flat expressionless voice. "Soap, George! You know where it is!"

The little man looked up with the air of one dragged unwillingly from a dream. In his small rabbit-eyes Christian patience did battle with resentment. I seemed to scent a crisis. Had the woman nagged him for his idleness I couldn't have blamed her. But what interested me

was not the rights and wrongs of the quarrel, but its method.

He blinked at her defiantly. There was a pregnant silence during which they stared at each other. Then the woman, protruding her chin, elongating her thin neck, bent a little towards him. I was dumbfounded with astonishment, breathless with a kind of morbid curiosity. For the moment it seemed to me that she must be mutely demanding a kiss in token of his submission; but while I watched, fascinated out of my good manners, she lifted her hand slowly and placed her index finger upon the point of her chin. It flashed on me that she was directing his attention to that mole of hers.

Gubbins, averting his eyes, slid off the seat. "Yes, dear!" he muttered, and disappeared into the bowels of the shop.

## II

Secrets of the confessional? Yes, in a sense. But Gubbins wouldn't grudge you the story now. It was during that phenomenally cold spell in November, fifteen months ago, that he came to me. That he came to me at all should tell you something of his anguish of spirit, if you knew the man. Everybody knew him to be a deeply religious person, of the Bible-punching kind, but not everybody guessed how his particular conception of reality had eaten into his mind. He could prove to you by an elaborate system of Scriptural cross-references that the Day of Judgment was due to occur in the summer of 1950; and the geography of heaven was more familiar to him, and more concrete, than the chairs and tables in his own house or the streets of this village. Two-thirds of him lived among these precise humorless dreams of his, dreams that were the fruit not of mystical experience but of laborious investigations, with rule and compass and a table of logarithms, extended over fifteen years. Two-thirds of him—that means he was more than a little unbalanced. He was a preposterous combination of

arrogance and humility; we had many a friendly argument together, though the friendliness, I fancy, was rather on my side. Blandly certain of being the custodian of divine truth, he was yet pitifully dubious about his own chance of salvation and almost crazy in his forlorn pursuit of the love of God. Almost, but not quite; in the medical sense he was undoubtedly as sane as you or I. Me and all my kind he disliked because we receive payment for preaching Christ. That is what makes his appeal to me so remarkable an event.

Well, he came to the rectory and was admitted by the maid. She was loyal to her orders to exclude no one, but scared by his appearance. I found him standing on my study hearthrug, his face ashen, his lean, hairy hands clutching a cloth cap as though it were his only hold on safety. The white knuckles gleamed like polished ivory. I saw the fear that flared in his tiny eyes and guessed that he had come as a suppliant, that in some way his faith in himself had been broken. And, knowing of old the obstinate strength of that faith, I shuddered.

"In trouble, Mr. Gubbins?"

He appeared not to see my outstretched hand. "I've had an escape from hell," he squeaked. "It's that damned monkey-spot, Mr. Saunders."

The mild expletive, coming from Gubbins, astonished me no less than his statement. I asked him to sit down and tell me all about it, but he remained standing and his fingers twitched so violently that presently his cap fell to the ground unheeded. "It nearly got me, sir, that monkey-spot." A local expression, no doubt; but what did it mean? Gubbins saw at last that I didn't understand him. "That monkey-spot on her chin. My wife's chin. You must have seen it."

Can you imagine two human beings, tied by marriage, devoting all their emotional energy to hating each other? Perhaps not; but that is, as near as I can tell it to you, the truth about the Gubbinses. Twenty years ago she was an unremarkable woman, and he, no doubt, a very ordinary youth. Mere propinquity, I imagine, threw them at each other. He, with little or nothing of the genuine affec-

tion that might have excused the act, took advantage of her, as the phrase is. Sin number one, the first link in the chain that was to bind him, the first grievance for her to cherish in her ungenerous heart. They were married three months before the birth of the child. It died within an hour. She chose to see in this event the punishment of the sin into which he, as she contended, had betrayed her. From that moment Gubbins was her thrall; not by virtue of love, or the legal tie, but by virtue of the hideous moral ascendancy that the woman had been cunning enough, and pitiless enough, to establish over him. Carefully she kept alive the memory of his offence. It was a whip ready to her hand. And when, seeking distraction from his domestic misery, he turned to that intricate game of guesswork which was for him religion, what he learned there of the significance of sin only served to increase his wretchedness.

He was evidently a man weak both in spirit and intelligence, or he would have realised at once that he was no more guilty than she was. Once she had succeeded in imposing her view upon him he could not shake it off. It remained, to poison his self-respect. Side by side with his conviction of unworthiness there grew up a hatred of the woman he was supposed to have wronged. And, being itself sinful, this very hatred provided a further occasion for remorse. It was a race between loathing and repentance, and loathing won. Never a personable woman, Mrs. Gubbins became daily more repellent, until at last the wretched husband found her mere presence a discomfort, like an ill-fitting shoe or a bad smell. In particular, he detested—as well he might—that mole on her chin, with its three feline hairs. And she, fiendishly acute, found it all out. She caught his sidelong glances of distaste, and pondered them long; and that distaste became another weapon to her hand. She accused him of harbouring cruel thoughts; taunted him with first robbing her of youth and then despising her for lacking it; flung out wild and baseless charges of infidelity. To propitiate her he made the most fantastic concessions; allowed her to turn him out of the shop, and consented to do all the housework

in her stead. It became patent to the world that she was master.

You'll ask why he was fool enough to put up with this treatment? But, given his weakness, the explanation is credible enough. She attacked him at his most vulnerable point, his conscience. Religion, as he conceived it, taught him to submit to circumstances, not to master them. In his darkest hour he could still kneel at his bedside and say, "Thy will, not mine, be done." And he really believed for a while that God's will and Mrs. Gubbins's were in mystical accord, that she, in fine, was the rod with which, for his own soul's good, heaven was scourging him. To aid this grotesque delusion there was the spectacle of her formal piety. For she was a prayerful woman, scrupulous in her speech, and of unquestioned honesty in her commercial transactions.

If only he could have cursed her and stood by his words, she might have mended. But he, arrogant enough to believe he had unravelled the ultimate secrets of destiny, dared not pit his moral judgment against hers. He was ever ready to sit on the stool of repentance. A day came when hatred rose to a frenzy in him. He cut short her complaints with an oath, poured out the gall of his heart upon her. She seemed quelled, and in his triumph he added a taunt, banal and indeed puerile: "You whiskered old cat!" It was a fatal mistake. She stared at him mutely for a moment, no doubt in sheer astonishment. Then her eyes narrowed and something like a smile twisted her lips. "Cat and mouse," she remarked coldly. And—call the man a fool, if you like—that reply terrified Gubbins as nothing else could have done.

He had betrayed himself once more into the hands of the enemy. He had provided her with a new and a bitter grievance. Worst of all, she knew his secret, knew that his loathing centred on that monkey-spot of hers, as he called it. From that moment I imagine her cherishing her precious mole with the solicitude that Sampson, had he been a wiser man, would have lavished upon his hair. It was the source and the instrument of her power. So far as I understood Gubbins, it was as much nausea as

hatred that the thing inspired in him. His soul sickened at the sight of it. It became a poison, a torture. All this she knew and exulted in. Curious that an æsthetic sense, together with a weak stomach, should suffice to work a man's downfall.

And so I come back to that night of fear, the events of which drove Gubbins, twenty hours' later, and still electric with terror, to the refuge of my study.

## III

Saunders paused to relight his pipe. One disconcerting thing about the affair, he resumed after a while, is that in Gubbins's account of his wife I can discover no human qualities at all. I fancy he himself had begun to regard her as an agent, not of God this time, but of the devil. Characteristic of him to jump from one pole to the other. And that theological fantasia, his imagination, may have coloured everything. That is as it may be. I can only tell you what he told me.

You know how quickly some noxious weed will overrun a flower-bed. Well, something of the kind happened in the ill-disciplined mind of Gubbins. He was pitifully susceptible to suggestion. An idle fancy presented itself to him: "Many a woman has been murdered for less than that monkey-spot." And the fancy became a fear which walked with him night and day, a fear lest he should be betrayed by sheer force of suggestion into murdering his wife. You realise what that would mean: it would mean damnation for his soul, or so he believed. The gallows had but few terrors for him. I think he would have welcomed death, could he have been sure of his salvation hereafter.

The seed was sown. The idea took root. And the more passionately he struggled against it, the more persistently his imagination envisaged the crime. At last one night, after a hundred sleepless hours, he reached the end of his tether.

He jumped noiselessly out of bed. Moonlight flooded the room, imparting a ghastly pallor to the face of the supine Mrs. Gubbins. In sleep she had something of the chill dignity of a corpse lying in state. The thin lips curled back a little on one side of the mouth, and in the gap gleamed a gold-crowned tooth, a tiny yellow fang. On the point of her chin was that at which the wretched man tried not to look; itself not very offensive, but rendered hideous by the three black jealously guarded hairs depending from it. Gubbins swears that as he stood staring at his wife's face those hairs were moving to and fro like the long legs of a spider, or the antennæ of an insect seeking prey.

Having gazed long, he forced his fascinated eyes away, and padded across the room. The door clicked, in spite of him, as he opened it. He experienced all the terrors of a guilty man. Yet his intention was innocent enough; it was even, in its grotesque fashion, comical. He had determined to shear this female Samson of her power by cutting off those three hairs.

But when he returned to the bedside, and stood again by the sleeping body of his wife, he was overcome by nausea. Distaste for the task paralysed his will. He felt as a sensitive man would feel if he were forced to crush a beetle with his naked finger. As an excuse for delay he began examining the instrument in his hand, which was a perfectly ordinary pair of household scissors having, as all scissors have, one end sharp and one blunted. The sharp end interested him most. He scrutinised its point and pressed it against the ball of his thumb; and the thought flashed to him, as though the devil himself had whispered it: "This is sharp enough—one thrust under the left ear!" He shuddered, recoiled from the idea, and burned with shame and fear for having ever had it. And, while still suffocating with the sense of his own guiltiness, there crept into his consciousness the nightmare conviction that he was being watched. He could not see his wife, his gaze being fixed on the scissors, but he knew that she had opened her eyes.

Gubbins couldn't explain to me the horror of that

moment. He merely bowed his head on my mantelpiece and closed his eyes as if to shut out an evil vision. For when, after an age of immobility and silence, he forced himself to look at the face on the bed, he saw the cruel lips curled in a smile of final triumph; and even the opaque eyes seemed for once to shine. And what, for Gubbins, gave the last turn to the screw of terror was that the woman was not looking at him at all. Her gaze, full of evil beatitude, was fixed on the ceiling. For several minutes, minutes that throbbed with his agony, she neither moved nor spoke; and at last, very slowly, she moved a little higher on to the pillow and, still smiling insanely, bared her throat for him to strike. Gubbins was convinced that she ardently desired him to stain his soul with her blood.

Well, as you know, he didn't murder her: not that time, at any rate. He escaped, as he said, from hell. But I think I would as soon go to hell as to have to live through those last fifteen months of his. For now she had completed his enslavement; now she had got his miserable little soul between her finger and thumb. Added to all her old grievances, those daggers with which to stab at his conscience, she had another and a more sensational one: this terrible sin, this attempt upon her life. . . . Spiritual blackmail prolonged for twenty years. No wonder he set fire to the place.

# BLACK COUNTRY[1]

By THOMAS BURKE

(From *Lloyd's Story Magazine*)

FROM the edge of Stewpony Heath, if you are fool enough to go there, you look into a queer country of queer people. A football-kick away, Clutterfield glowers and glows and twinkles, and Woolingford belches flame, and a mile away the burning refuse of Pinksey dresses the night with dancing rainbows. Smoke of a hundred hues from a hundred stacks floats over the valley and into the villages, turning common streets into the stuff of nightmares and darkening the very thoughts of men. Factories invest the horizon with stars and ribbons of light. Against the increasing yellow of the evening, the lacing wheels of the shafts rise densely black, and dimly the great smoke-stacks, far and near, group themselves in accidental grandeur, and curse the sky with grunt and spit and bellow.

From that valley come no tales of heroics or sacrifice or conquest; nothing of tears; only tales of waste, tales of beauty gone astray. The tale of Charlie Crabble, for instance.

. . . . . .

In the lemon dusk of an afternoon of winter, Charlie stood above that valley, staring at the great Woolingford stack, and mouthing a girl's name, rolling it on the mud of his tongue, using it vainly with stab and flash.

Jessie Snashall.

At first he had worshipped from afar the beauty of her fourteen years, and the close contemptuous eyes, and

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the intense hair which she wore in a swinging plait, and the frock which seemed to flirt by itself as she frisked about the High Street. But she was unapproachable as a movie-queen, and that morning, sick with his eye-making, his tentative advances—brushing against her in the factory-yard or following her home—sick of this, she had exploded.

"Ey, yew, Charl' Crabble—yew jis' stop 'angin' round me. See? Look at my new sweet'eart, gels. What is ut? Tidden a man." She spat. "Put 'is dirty 'ands on me, an' all. Like 'avin' a toad jump on ya. 'E idden a man. 'E's a ———"

She cried a name that fitted him like a thumbscrew, and set his skin crawling with shame and fury. Bright mouths took it up, eruptive voices used it, betraying his secret to the profanity of words. Their fingers shot showers of needles at him, and when they gave him orders to march, he obeyed them, and slunk away, dog-wise, as he always did.

But not without a look back.

With that look he knew that he would not rest until he had brought Jessie off her perch; and he stood now, debating the matter, seeking inspiration. Her jeers and her indifference he had endured; but this sudden discovery and betrayal—it had to be answered, and to be answered upon her. His knees sagged. His shoulders made an acute angle with his head. He had a wry, mobile mouth that smiled and leered in one movement; and it smiled and leered now as he mumbled Jessie's name.

Gawd, if he could get her and—

He stopped on that. His eyes began to sparkle. He swayed himself to and fro. Out of the valley an idea came crawling. He pondered it and mumbled, "Ey, yeah!" His lips parted to taste it. He clucked his tongue in his mouth. He took half a cigarette from the top of his ear, and lit it. His hands shook as he held the match. It was a daisy of an idea, if he could do it. Not only would it bring her down in shame; it would lend him bright hours to set against his loneliness.

Damn all, he would. Right now.

He flung away his fag-end, and started down the slope

to the huddled houses of the town. As he passed a corner-lot where urchins were playing idiot football by the light of a furnace, there was a sudden outcry—"Look out, fellers! Charlie Crabble!"—and a helter-skelter. They fled to the edge of a lot, and at a safe distance shouted timid jeers. He sent them a casual obscenity, and passed on. He hadn't time to chase them; his mind was on this daisy of an idea.

In a side-street of the town a blank wall caught his eye. It was Jessie's street. He stopped under a gas-lamp, and with a piece of chalk scribbled certain words, linking them with Jessie's full name.

He shivered as he wrote the word Girl. It was a caress to his ear. Around it he daily hung a hundred desperate dreams. For him the empire of girls was a gracious enclosure away from the reek and stain of his monotonous weeks: a riverside garden; woodland rides; moist meadows; tireless days and nights; delicious clothes and urgent limbs. Once in London, on a Cup Tie day, he had looked through the unshaded window of a West End square, and had received a random eyeshot of white table, gleaming arms, and sleek coats; the flash of silver and the glint of glass swimming in a glow of pink. It was more than a glimpse of London; more than a glimpse into the cool world of the rich; it was a glimpse into a life beyond; and at the sight of a frill-frocked girl these pictures crowded upon him, and his blood stirred and his heart became humble. Their clothes tossed him murmurs of profound secrets, and he had looked with ecstasy for the day when he should click on the Wide Walk of Bruncle with that shy-wild thing, Jessie Snashall, and feed with her at the Heel-and-Trotter shop, and take her home and discover the world transfigured in the white wealth and wonder of her snow-drop body.

For him the poorest drab of the factory was a processional princess, a blot of beauty on the horned face of Stewpony, glowing for him alone. Yet never had he achieved the dream. Girls daunted him. Little girls of fourteen carried centuries of years and wisdom, and their challenging lip and ardent eye set him floundering. Other

lads, younger than himself, knew the game, and were taken seriously; but he, deeply desiring, was smitten to ineptitude by a glance. He became abject; his clothes suddenly did not fit him; and he would slink away and hide his hot face from those eyes. They laughed at his feet and his face and his hat, though these were in no way different from those of the boys upon whom they beamed. But he despised himself. Because he could not reach his own standard of fitness, he sank below theirs; and they knew it.

And when at last he did summon the audacity to make deliberate approaches, they fled from him.

Girls of every sort fled from him—little girls in silent apprehension; the girls of the Wide Walk, using their tongues and their faces; but all instant for flight. Other lads got off with a leer. He gave them the sweetest smile his eyes knew, and they ballooned away from him. No matter with what twist of bravado or airiness he addressed them, something about him gave them creeping shoulders, and they ran. Jessie had discovered and named that "something."

At last he accepted his exile. Often he had seen in the upper parts of the town gracious girls whose beauty seemed ethereal, so far removed were they from his forlorn present; young girls in carriages, whose lives were silken and scented with refinements he could never know; and often his heart had beaten itself against the battlement of stars that guarded their paradise. Often he had fancied that at some time he would move, by a step that would magically bridge the intervening points, into that world, where he would be acclaimed as one of rare parts. He would visit some country house, and there would be a beautiful young daughter who would admire and wonder. Or he would stay at splendid hotels and enchant girls and take delicious romps with love. He would bestow kisses upon shining lips. His shambling limbs would wear fine raiment finely. He would achieve startling heroisms and smile them away.

Often he had peeped in at warm tavern doors in bye-streets, mirthful with the carousals of the puddlers, and had wished that he could be one of them, and could drink beer,

and bet, and tell the jolly tale, and be arch with the girls and carry his archness with applause.

Often he had gone down Stogumber Street, the tart's street of Stewpony, where at any house, if Lottie were engaged, Molly could be seen; and had wished that he dared enter. But he knew that it was all beyond him. He knew, without being told, that he crawled. And he was now content to let it be so.

One stormy Sunday he had discovered, near Woolingford, a giant smoke-stack, standing derelict. Between sun and thunder it reared its pitted head, and in that lone landscape, under the twilight, it loomed like something not of heaven or of earth or of space. It beckoned him, and to its menace he surrendered himself; and there, under the pouring smoke and the gibbering tongues of flame, he hid and possessed all that the world denied him. He felt that he understood it, and that it understood him. He began to haunt it for what it yielded to him. He began to set his Walpurgis dreams against its ugliness, and to evoke the image of Jessie, floating, in the finished beauty of childhood, as a phantom fresco. He brought fabulous tapestries to life. He made his mind a home for midnight legends. He was no more dismayed because he was unlike others: they had the minds and souls of bloaters. He was content to mooch, lonely and loveless, about the half-hearted High Street, eyeing moodily the silk Sunday frock of Jessie that danced at her knees, and the audacious hat that got her off with the boys. He hated the lads who found favour with her, and hated her for finding them favourable; and in his heart dreams and devils made everlasting battle.

. . . . . .

But now he saw how he might have his way with her, and wipe out that taunt of hers: the Woolingford stack had once more lent him inspiration. He was not now sorry that she had made that scene; without it he might never have been stirred to the idea; and he went loping off to his dark purpose, chuckling and quivering. It was Saturday night and the streets held the babble and parade of that festival. The pavements gleamed under recent rain, and

the shops flung nebulæ of their lights upon them. Shopmen and hawkers cried their wares. Naphthas screamed with yellow tongues. The gas-lamps bleared and blew; and in pavement and road fluttered the giggles and the glances of youth. The silver beauties of thirteen picked up their schoolboys; the striding sixteens their lads; and the women found their men and made for the saloons and the vaults.

But he was no longer envious. Though a girl cried his name from the crowd—"Hey, Charl' Crabble—Jessie Snashall says she'll strangle you if you touch 'er again!" —he ignored her, and loped on to Frostick Street.

In the underground room where he had his lodging he stayed scarce a minute.

When he came out his hand opened and closed in his pocket on a razor, newly sharpened.

Outside the Splendora Picture House the regular crowd of youths and girls was lined up for the evening show. Demonstrably among them were Jessie and her friends, monkeying and parroting. At six o'clock the doors opened. For some minutes there was a scamper and rattle of coins; then peace and a full house. Jessie secured her favourite position—in the back row—and soon filled it with gurgles and surreptitious comedy.

The piano began to vamp, and the first picture began to dance on the screen. Those who cannot look at the movies without using their ears began to "Sh!" towards Jessie's party. But she was in good form to-night, and her pert comment on the drama and bold sallies on the morality of its characters would not be suppressed.

It opened briskly; and they were quickly gripped by its first situation; so that neither she nor her friends saw a figure slide from a corner-seat and take a position behind one of the supporting pillars at her back.

"Ey, 'e's a one, that Sir Guy, idden 'e? Some o' they fellers oughta be smothered. Like that Charlie Crabble, eh? I pity the gel 'e gets 'old of, the ————"

Behind her he felt for his razor and opened it. Her head, with its saucy tam o' shanter, was inclined towards one of her friends, and her dense hair, unplaited for Saturday night, and gathered only with a scarlet ribbon,

drooped over the back of the seat. He went on tip-toe towards her. A lovers' meeting in the drama gave him his chance. He took it. The razor made one stroke.

He went through the doors as a dim streak, choking with little thrills. His right hand opened and closed in his coat pocket, but now his fingers were soothed by a thick soft rope that carried to him the feel of fog and the shine of dark water and muffled fancies that made him tremulous and weak. Out in the street his feet went erratically. Once or twice he laughed, and the laugh ended in a sob.

Girl's hair. Jessie's hair; the soft hair that her fingers daily touched and tended. She was his, now. With this much of her a hundred bright moments were to be had at will. Marvellous dim avenues stretched before him. . . .

But it wasn't two minutes before the lights went up in the cinema, and with the withdrawal of concentration, Jessie felt a sudden coolness. Immediately there was a to-do in the six-penny seats, as if one had stirred up a pool of eels. She made known her loss in demonstrative manner. She sprang up and cried out to the theatre at large, and her friends added their exclamations and commiserating words. They wrangled over it, and the news spread to the outlying seats. These expressed concern in many inconsequent sentences. Then a girl in a far corner offered information.

"Bet I know who 'tes. That dirty Charl' Crabble were standin' be'ind yew, Jess."

They grabbed the name and mucked it about. "Ey, that's it, right 'nough. Ba gum! Ey, that's it. . . . Charlie Crabble. . . . Charlie Crabble. . . . Jes' what 'e would do. . . . That's 'cos yew told 'im orf 'smornin', Jess. . . . I thought 'e were up t'something be'ind there. . . . Ey, Charlie Crabble."

The boys took it up and bit it. The girls took it up, and tore it and shook it. The name buzzed and clattered about the cinema to the disturbance of the shilling seats and the impotent anger of the balcony who hadn't heard the beginning of it. It was as though liberties were taken with it with a piece of chalk on a wall.

Then a bright maid comforted Jessie and delighted her friends with an idea.

"Nev' mind, Jess. . . . It'll soon grow again. . . . Tell ya what—less all go round t'is place, an' give 'im rough music. Eh? An' run 'im out o' Stewpony. Eh?"

It was an inspiration. They rose to it.

"Ey, that's style. . . . Run 'im out!"

"Gi'm a good kick in backside—that'll learn 'im."

They left in a heavy-footed bunch, with Jessie in their midst, bowed, sobbing, and swearing. "I'd like t'choke 'im. I'd like—"

In the High Street the girls hung around her, effervescent with impatience, heads together, hands pointing and flying; while the boys ran to their homes for tin cans, old kettles, pails, and fire-irons. Half an hour later, with the steps and bearing of conspirators, they moved, fully armed, upon the end house of Frostick Street. . . .

Safe in his room Charlie locked his door, lit the lamp, and sat down on the bed. He breathed deeply. His face was shining and white. He threw his overcoat on the table, and sat looking at the right-hand pocket. At last he stretched a hand, and slowly, gently, he took from it his trophy, and held it up before him; and as it dropped out of its folds his cellar was lit up by Jessie's own radiance. "Ey, my beauty. . . . Ey! I gotcha now!"

Nothing could mock him now; nothing could bite or rasp him. Beauty met face to face. Glory revealed. The wilderness of his days set in order. The street-noises touched to the peace of a garden.

With the red ribbon he tied it to the bed-rail, and knelt before it, exultant, as before a shrine, and cooled his face against it; and while the squalid minutes stumbled and jerked from the alarm clock, he curled it round his throat, and made himself its captive.

He was awakened by a sudden cry, and in the shock of the moment he started up. His foot slipped. He fell.

. . . . . .

Outside his window the rough-music party gathered, and one cried, "Hey!"

There was no answer; only a queer noise; a sort of gurgling. The group cried, "Hey!" in concert. No answer. They cried in confused effort, "Ya wanted, Charl' Crabble. Come out, Charl' Crabble." One threw a daub of mud at the window. The pane fell in with a little tinkle. More mud and stones followed, and other panes went in, and the cries increased. But they heard nothing of Charlie Crabble; nothing.

Until big Fred Snashall kicked the door in, pushed the old landlady aside, and clumbered downstairs.

He was scarcely gone before he came clumbering up, gasping and pointing behind him. "His neck! His neck!" And there was no rough music that night. The boys and girls gathered round him. Their cans and kettles hung idle. About them were darkness, outlines of cottages, shuffling feet and Fred's husky whispering; and at their feet a lighted window that leered dumbly.

# ALAS, POOR BOLLINGTON![1]

By A. E. COPPARD

(From *The Saturday Review*)

"I WALKED out of the hotel, just as I was, and left her there. I never went back again. I don't think I intended anything quite so final, so dastardly; I had not intended it, I had not thought of doing so, but that is how it happened. I lost her, lost my wife purposely. It was heartless, it was shabby, for she was a nice woman, a charming woman, a good deal younger than I was, a splendid woman, in fact she was very beautiful, and yet I ran away from her. How can you explain that, Turner?"

Poor Bollington looked at Turner, who looked at his glass of whisky, and that looked irresistible—he drank some. Bollington sipped a little from his glass of milk.

I often found myself regarding Bollington as a little old man. Most of the club members did so too, but he was not that at all; he was still on the sunny side of fifty, but *so* unassertive, no presence to speak of, no height, not enough hair to mention—if there had been it would surely have been yellow. So mild and modest he cut no figure at all, just a man in glasses that seemed rather big for him. Turner was different though he was just as bald; he had stature and bulk, his very pincenez seemed twice the size of Bollington's spectacles. They had not met each other for ten years.

"Well, yes," Turner said, "but that was a serious thing to do."

"Wasn't it!" said the other, "and I had no idea of the enormity of the offence—not at the time. She might

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have been dead, poor girl, and her executors advertising for me. She had money you know, her people had been licensed victuallers, quite wealthy. Scandalous!"

Bollington brooded upon his sin until Turner sighed: "Ah, well, my dear chap."

"But you have no idea," protested Bollington, "how entirely she engrossed me. She was twenty-five and I was forty when we married. She was entrancing. She had always lived in a stinking hole in Balham, and it is amazing how strictly some of those people keep their children; licensed victuallers, did I tell you? Well, I was forty, and she was twenty-five; we lived for a year dodging about from one hotel to another all over the British Isles, she was a perfect little nomad—are *you* married, Turner?"

No, Turner was not married, he never had been.

"O, but you should be," cried little Bollington, "it's an extraordinary experience, the real business of the world is marriage, marriage. I was deliriously happy and she was learning French and Swedish—that's where we were going later. She was an enchanting little thing, fair with blue eyes. Phœbe her name was."

Turner thoughtfully brushed his hand across his generous baldness, then folded his arms.

"You really should," repeated Bollington, "you ought to, really. But I remember we went from Killarney to Belfast and there something dreadful happened. I don't know, it had been growing on her I suppose, but she took a dislike to me there, had strange fancies, thought I was unfaithful to her. You see she was popular wherever we went, a lively little woman, in fact she wasn't merely a woman she was a little magnet, men congregated and clung to her like so many tacks and nails and pins. I didn't object at all—on the contrary, 'Enjoy yourself, Phœbe,' I said, 'I don't expect you always to hang round an old fogey like me.' Fogey was the very word I used; I didn't mean it, of course, but that was the line I took for she was so charming until she began to get so bad tempered. And believe me, that made her angry, furious. No, not the fogey, but the idea that I

did not object to her philandering. It was fatal, it gave colour to her suspicions of me—Turner, I was as innocent as any lamb—tremendous colour. And she had such a sharp tongue! If you ventured to differ from her—and you couldn't help differing sometimes—she'd positively bludgeon you, and you couldn't help being bludgeoned. And she had a passion for putting me right, and I always seemed to be so very wrong, always. She would not be satisfied until she had proved it, and it was so monstrous to be made feel that because you were rather different from other people you were an impertinent fool. Yes, I seemed at last to gain only the pangs and none of the prizes of marriage. Now there was a lady we met in Belfast to whom I paid some attention. . . ."

"O, good lord!" groaned Turner.

"No, but listen," pleaded Bollington, "it was a very innocent friendship—nothing was further from my mind—and she was very much like my wife, very much; it was noticeable, everybody spoke of it—I mean the resemblance. A Mrs. Macarthy, a delightful woman, and Phœbe simply loathed her. I confess that my wife's innuendoes were so mean and persistent that at last I hadn't the strength to deny them, in fact at times I wished they were true. Love is idolatry if you like, but it cannot be complete immolation—there's no such bird as the phœnix, is there, Turner?"

"What, what?"

"No such bird as the phœnix?"

"No, there is no such bird, I believe."

"And sometimes I had to ask myself quite seriously if I really hadn't been up to some infidelity! Nonsense of course, but I assure you that was the effect it was having upon me. I had doubts of myself, frenzied doubts! And it came to a head between Phœbe and me in our room one day. We quarrelled, O dear, how we quarrelled! She said I was sly, two-faced, unfaithful, I was a scoundrel and so on. Awfully untrue, all of it. She accused me of dreadful things with Mrs. Macarthy, and she screamed out: 'I hope you will treat her better than you have treated me.' Now what did she mean by that, Turner?"

Bollington eyed his friend as if he expected an oracular answer, but just as Turner was about to respond Bollington continued: "Well, I never found out, I never knew, for what followed was too terrible. 'I shall go out,' I said, 'it will be better, I think.' Just that, nothing more. I put on my hat and I put my hand on the knob of the door when she said most violently: 'Go with your Macarthys, I never want to see your filthy face again!' Extraordinary you know, Turner. Well, I went out, and I will not deny I was in a rage, terrific. It was raining, but I didn't care and I walked about in it. Then I took shelter in a book seller's doorway opposite a shop that sold tennis rackets and tobacco, and another one that displayed carnations and peaches on wads of coloured wool. The rain came so fast that the streets seemed to empty, and the passers-by were horridly silent under their umbrellas and their footsteps splashed so dully, and I tell you *I* was very sad, Turner, there. I debated whether to rush across the road and buy a lot of carnations and peaches and take them to Phœbe. But I did not do so, Turner. I never went back, never."

"Why, Bollington, you—you were a positive ruffian, Bollington."

"O, scandalous," rejoined the ruffian.

"Well, out with it, what about this Mrs. Macarthy."

"Mrs. Macarthy? But, Turner, I never saw her again, never. I . . . I forgot her. Yes, I went prowling on until I found myself at the docks and there it suddenly became dark; I don't know, there was no evening, no twilight, the day stopped for a moment—and it did not recover. There were hundreds of bullocks slithering and panting and steaming in the road, thousands; lamps were hung up in the harbour, cabs and trollies rattled round the bullocks, the rain fell dismally and everybody hurried. I went into the dock and saw them loading a steamer, it was called *SS. Frolic,* and really, Turner, the things they put into the belly of that steamer were rather funny: tons and tons of monstrous big chain, the links as big as soup plates, and two or three pantechnicon vans. Yes, but I was anything but frolicsome, I assure you, I was full of

misery and trepidation and the deuce knows what. I did not know what I wanted to do or what I was going to do, but I found myself buying a ticket to go to Liverpool on that steamer and, in short, I embarked. How wretched I was, but how determined. Everything on board was depressing and dirty, and when at last we moved off the foam slewed away in filthy bubbles, as if that dirty steamer had been sick and was running away from it. I got to Liverpool in the early morn, but I did not stay there; it is such a clamouring place, all trams and trollies and teashops. I sat in the station for an hour, the most miserable man alive, the most miserable ever born. I wanted some rest, some peace, some repose, but they never ceased shunting an endless train of goods trucks, banging and screeching until I almost screamed at the very porters. Criff was the name on some of the trucks, I remember, Criff, and everything seemed to be going criff, criff, criff. I haven't discovered to this day what Criff signifies, whether it's a station, or a company, or a manufacture, but it was Criff, I remember. Well, I rushed to London and put my affairs in order. A day or two later I went to Southampton and boarded another steamer and put to sea, or rather we were ignominiously lugged out of the dock by a little rat of a tug that seemed all funnel and hooter. I was off to America, and there I stopped for over three years."

Turner sighed. A waiter brought him another glass of spirit.

"I can't help thinking, Bollington, that it was all very fiery and touchy. Of course I don't know, but really it was a bit steep, very squeamish of you. What did your wife say?"

"I never communicated with her, I never heard from her, I just dropped out. My filthy face, you know, she did not want to see it again."

"Oh, come, Bollington! And what did Mrs. Macarthy say?"

"Mrs. Macarthy! I never saw or heard of her again. I told you that."

"Ah, yes, you told me. So you slung off to America."

"I was intensely miserable there for a long while. Of course I loved Phœbe enormously, I felt the separation. I . . . O, it is impossible to describe. But what was worst of all was the meanness of my behaviour, there was nothing heroic about it. I soon saw clearly that it was a shabby trick, disgusting. I had bolted and left her to the mercy of . . . well, of whatever there was. It made such an awful barrier—you've no idea of my compunction—I couldn't make overtures—'Let us forgive and forget.' I was a mean rascal, I *was* filthy. That was the barrier—myself; I was too bad. I thought I should recover and enjoy life again. I began to think of Phœbe as a cat, a little cat. I went everywhere and did everything. But America is a big country. I couldn't get into contact. I was lonely, very lonely, and although two years went by I longed for Phœbe. Everything I did I wanted to do with Phœbe by my side. And then my cousin, my only relative in the world—he lived in England—he died. I scarcely ever saw him, but still he was my kin. And he died. You've no comprehension, Turner, of the truly awful sensation such a bereavement brings. Not a soul in the world now would have the remotest interest in my welfare. O, I tell you, Turner, it was tragic, tragic, when my cousin died. It made my isolation complete. I was alone, a man who had made a dreadful mess of life. What with sorrow and remorse, I felt that I should soon die, not of disease but disgust."

"You were a great ninny," ejaculated his friend. "Why the devil didn't you hurry back, claim your wife, bygones be bygones; why bless my conscience what a ninny, what a great ninny!"

"Yes, Turner, it is as you say. But though conscience is a good servant, it is a very bad master; it overruled me, it shamed me, and I hung on to America for still another year. I tell you my situation was unbearable, I was tied to my misery, I was a tethered dog, a duck without water—even dirty water. And I hadn't any faith in myself or in my case; I knew I was wrong, had always been wrong. Phœbe had taught me that. I hadn't any faith. I wish I

had had. Faith can move mountains, so they say, though I've never heard of it actually being done."

"No, not in historical times," declared Turner.

"What do you mean by that?"

"O well, time is nothing, it's nothing, it comes and off it goes. Has it ever occurred to you, Bollington, that in five thousand years or so there will be nobody in the world speaking the English language, our very existence even will be speculated upon, as if we were the Anthropophagi? O good lord, yes."

And another whisky.

"You know, Bollington, you were a perfect fool. You behaved like one of those half-baked civil service hounds who lunch in a dairy on a cup of tea and a cream horn. You wanted some beef, some ginger. You came back, you must have come back because here you are now."

"Yes, Turner, I came back after nearly four years. Everything was different, ah, how strange! I could not find Phœbe, it is weird how people can disappear. I made inquiries, but it was like looking for a lost umbrella, fruitless after so long."

"Well, but what about Mrs. Macarthy?"

Mr. Bollington said, slowly and with the utmost precision: "I—did—not—see—Mrs.—Macarthy—again."

"O, of course, you did not see her again, not ever."

"Not ever. I feared Phœbe had gone abroad too, but at last I found her in London. . . ."

"No," roared Turner, "why the devil couldn't you say so, and done with it? I've been sweating with sympathy for you. O, I say, Bollington!"

"My dear Turner, listen. Do you know she was delighted to see me, she even kissed me, straight off, and we went out to dine and had the very deuce of a spread and we were having the very deuce of a good time. She was lovelier than ever and I could see all her old affection for me was returning, she was so . . . well, I can't tell you, Turner, but she had no animosity whatever, no grievance, she would certainly have taken me back that very night. O dear, dear . . . and then! I was anxious to throw myself at her feet, but you couldn't

do that in a public café; I could only touch her hands, beautiful, as they lay on the white linen cloth. I kept asking: 'Do you forgive me?' and she would reply: 'I have nothing to forgive, dear, nothing.' How wonderful that sounded to my truly penitent soul—I wanted to die.

"'But you don't ask me where I've been!' she cried gaily, 'or what I've been doing, you careless old Peter. I've been to France, and Sweden, too!'

"I was delighted to hear that, it was so very plucky.

"'When did you go?' I asked.

"'When I left you,' she said.

"'You mean when I went away?'

"'Did you go away? O, of course, you must have. Poor Peter, what a sad time he has had.'

"I was a little bewildered, but I was delighted; in fact, Turner, I was hopelessly infatuated again. I wanted to wring out all the dregs of my detestable villainy and be absolved. All I could begin with was:

"'Were you not very glad to be rid of me?'

"'Well,' she said, 'my great fear at first was that you would find me again and make it up. I didn't want that, then, at least I thought I didn't.'

"'That's exactly what I felt,' I exclaimed, 'but how could I find you?'

"'Well,' Phœbe said, 'you might have found out and followed me. But I promise never to run away again, Peter dear, never.'

"Turner, my reeling intelligence swerved like a shot bird:

"'Do you mean, Phœbe, that you ran away from *me?*'

"'Yes, didn't I?' she answered.

"'But I ran away from *you,*' I said. 'I walked out of the hotel on that dreadful afternoon we quarrelled so and I never went back. I went to America. I was in America nearly four years.'

"'Do you mean you ran away from me?' she cried.

"'Yes,' I said, 'didn't I?'

"'But that is exactly what I did—I mean, I ran away from you. *I* walked out of the hotel directly you had gone. *I* never went back and I've been abroad thinking

how tremendously I had served you out and wondering what you thought of it all and where you were.'

"I could only say, 'Good God, Phœbe, I've had the most awful four years of remorse and sorrow, all vain, mistaken, useless, thrown away.' And she said, 'And I've had four years—living in a fool's paradise, after all. How dared you run away, it's disgusting.'

"And, Turner, in a moment she was at me again in her old dreadful way, and the last words I had from her were: 'Now I *never* want to see your face again, never; this *is* the end!'

"And that's how things are now, Turner. It's rather sad, isn't it?"

"Sad! Why you chump, when was it you saw her?"

"O, a long time ago, it must be nearly three years now."

"Three years! But you'll see her again!"

"Tfoo! No, no, no, Turner! God bless me, no, no, no!" said the little old man.

# SINDBAD OF "SUNNY LEA"[1]

By NORMAN DAVEY

(From *John o' London's Weekly*)

"A CUP of black coffee; a small cup of black coffee and a glass of plain water," I heard him say to the waiter. He had said the same thing to the same waiter for the last twenty years. The coffee-cups at the Trireme Club, it is scarcely needful to point out, are all of the same size. But he never varied his formula: it was always "a small cup of black coffee" that he desired—"a small cup of black coffee and a glass of plain water."

He was to be seen three or four days in the week in the corner of the large smoking-room behind the revolving bookcase which holds the thin-paper edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica. He was in the habit of finishing his lunch early—at least by half-past one—so as to be sure of finding his favourite chair unoccupied; though it is to be doubted if any club waiter would have allowed another member to annex this particular chair while James Pettigrew was at lunch. He had acquired, as it were, over a period of years, a prescriptive right to his corner.

At the time of his mother's death he was fifty-three years of age; and his head, shaped like an egg, and bald save for a fringe of reddish-coloured hair at the back and over the ears: his straight nose and clean-shaven chin: his large, round gold-rimmed spectacles and his long frock-coat were distinctive properties of the Trireme Club.

While waiting for his coffee he would take a leather cigar-case from his pocket. He always smoked the same

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make of cigar—a Borneo cheroot of a mild order. When the waiter came with his coffee and the glass of water, he would very commonly say: "Will you give my compliments to Mr. Patten and ask him if he will speak to me a moment?" Or, sometimes: "Will you kindly tell Mr. Patten that I should like to see him for a moment if he is disengaged?"

Patten was a stout little man in tinted glasses who had been librarian to the Trireme Club for nearly twice the number of years that James Pettigrew had been a member of it. Through many years, he knew well enough beforehand the books for which Pettigrew would ask, and he might, indeed, have laid them to hand upon the revolving book-case in the corner before James Pettigrew came up to the smoking-room. But such an action would have broken into the ritual that was dear to the hearts of both of them.

"You wish to see me, sir," Patten would say; and Pettigrew would answer:

"Good morning, Mr. Patten. I hope I am not disturbing you?"

"Not at all, sir."

"Then I should be obliged if you will bring me the Burton."

"Yes, sir; the sixth volume, sir?"

"Er—yes; volume six, please."

And a little later Patten would return, crossing the room with that noiseless, tripping gait common alike to vergers and club librarians, and, holding out the book to Pettigrew, would say:

"Volume six of the 'Alf Laylah wa Laylah,' sir."

It was always the "Alf Laylah wa Laylah" to Patten, never the "Arabian Nights."

Or, at times, Pettigrew would ask for some other book. Often it was a volume of Hakluyt or the "Hajji Baba." Sometimes it was Yule's "Marco Polo" or Doughty's "Arabia Deserta"; at other times Coryatt or Le Bruyn or Manucci or Rawlinson's "Herodotus." But always it was a book of travel and adventure, especially of Eastern travel, and when it was Burton it was always the sixth

volume, for in that volume are to be found the most wonderful travel stories in the world, those of Sindbad the Sailor. It would not be easy to make any near guess as to the number of times that Pettigrew had read the adventures of Sindbad. It must have been a great number of times, and there were several passages that Pettigrew knew by heart.

"I was living a most enjoyable life," he would repeat, with a shrug of his shoulders, "until one day my mind became possessed with the thought of travelling about the world of men and seeing their cities and islands; and a longing seized upon me to traffic and to make money by trade." Or, again, "The old bad man within me yearned to go and enjoy the sight of strange countries—" And among the club servants (it is to be feared that the admirable Patten was human, and so frail at times) he was known as Sindbad or Old Sindbad.

James Pettigrew usually left the club at a quarter past three in order to catch the three-forty-five to Ashtead. On some days, however, he would stay on at the club and, after a cup of tea and some dry toast, catch the five-fifteen or five-forty-five from Waterloo.

He was a man who spoke but little; for, truth to tell, he had no friends. Occasionally, however, to a chance acquaintance, he would talk a little of the East; this subject arising, commonly, out of some remark made by a fellow-member as to the book which Pettigrew was reading at the moment. His manner was always formal and his diction precise. Yet behind the mask of his pedantry and restraint a strange gleam of enthusiasm would, now and then, appear: like the ray of sunlight through a cloud rift on a November day. If (as it might happen) his interlocutor chanced to be an Indian Civil Servant, or confessed himself an Oriental traveller and withal of a sympathetic spirit, he was likely to be plied with questions and even entrusted with a confidence.

Perhaps the traveller would say that he had returned from Persia; that it was a fascinating country, full of wonder and mystery—that the Oriental mind—

"So I have been led to believe," Pettigrew would break

in. "I have read not a little—Brown, and Burton of course, and Yule and Doughty—"

"But you have not been in the East yourself?"

"No, sir; unhappily I have been unable—it has always been my ambition—but I have been unable to leave England. My mother—" And James Pettigrew would cough and, taking off his spectacles, wipe them meticulously with the silk handkerchief from his breast-pocket, and ask about Meshed or Ispahan.

Or, perhaps, if one was very patient and of a humane understanding, he would finish the sentence: "My mother is an old lady now—well on in years—and quite alone. I could not very well leave her for so long; she is—er—much attached to me; she would feel it deeply if I were to—I am afraid that it is impossible, at present, for me to undertake so long a journey." He would shake his head and sigh regretfully and return again to questionings of the rose gardens of Shiraz, of the ruins of Persepolis, of the Mosque, the caravan, and the bazaar.

In the small village of Ashtead in Surrey, as in the Trireme Club, James Pettigrew was a distinctive, indeed a distinguished, figure. He was a warden of the church and of very material help to the vicar. He acted as lay reader from time to time. He was a member of the local board of guardians. He was, above all, the son of Mrs. Graham Pettigrew, who remained almost the sole relic of an aristocracy that had been absorbed or driven away by the suburban invasion. Mrs. Pettigrew died in her eighty-third year, and up to the day of her death was active in mind and of an unconquerable spirit. Though unable during the last few years of her life to journey far afield or to call, as often as she could wish, upon her neighbours, she yet suffered neither the ordeal of being prisoned in her bedroom nor the ignominy of a wheeled chair; and on the day before she died she sat in a chair on the lawn and superintended the pruning of the tea roses by Dallison, the gardener.

She passed away (it is the Victorian phrase that she would herself have used) in peace; happily and without regret, in the presence of Dr. Stott, the vicar, her son,

and Harding, the elderly maid who had been her devoted attendant for more than twenty years. She died as she had lived, decently and in due order, as was fitting in one who had stood for half a lifetime at the head of the society in which she had lived.

Her husband had been Graham Pettigrew of Atkinson, Atkinson, Pettigrew & Keane, the well-known firm of family solicitors. He had died, of pneumonia, while James was still at Magdalene, leaving his widow with an income of (at that time) some two thousand pounds a year from gilt-edged securities and the freehold of Sunny Lea. She mourned for him, decently, as was becoming in the widow of a family solicitor, and devoted herself to the care of her son (who was her only child) and her behaviour in that society which had already become centered about her.

James did nothing at Cambridge to distinguish him from other men. His activity at Fenner's was commendable but commonplace; he was popular in College without being in any way notorious; he contributed (on two occasions) the sum of thirteen shillings and fourpence to the university funds for not wearing a gown, and took, at the end of his third year, an ordinary degree in History. When he left Cambridge, he returned to Ashtead to live with his mother at Sunny Lea. During the next few years he read, in a desultory manner, for the Bar. He ate a number of dinners at his Inn and was eventually called. He never practised.

Also, he never married. There were two, or maybe three, reasons for this. Soon after James had left Cambridge he fell in love with a girl of nineteen who was gifted with great strength of character and a knowledge of material values remarkable in one of her years. His suit was refused, but he remained a faithful wooer for several years, until, indeed, Cynthia married the Hon. Kenneth Channer-Pett of the Foreign Office. His mother (who was a very able woman) supported him in his intention. A hopeless attachment of this sort is the best safeguard against a hasty and unsuitable marriage.

It is possible that James Pettigrew might have married some years later, but other reasons now prevailed with

him. His marriage would, of necessity, alter completely his way of life; he would be no longer able to live at Ashtead; there would not be room for his mother and his wife in the same house. And although his mother was accustomed often to say (and more often as she grew older) that it was her one wish to see her son happily married before she died, it is to be believed that she spoke in this way more because it was becoming in her so to speak than because she sincerely wished it. But another, and perhaps a stronger, motive worked in the mind of James Pettigrew to postpone his marriage. Through many years his wish to travel, especially to travel far afield, had grown yearly stronger. He pictured the East, romantically, as the Mecca to which one day he would attain. At present he was happy in his duty to his mother; he could not, he daily admitted to himself, leave her alone for so long a time, or go so far away; but at her death he would be free to set out upon adventure and to reach, as he best loved to picture it:

A rose-red city half as old as Time.

If, in the meantime, he were to marry, these dreams of many years would be unfulfilled for ever. So James Pettigrew lived still at Ashtead, and became, as befitted the son of Mrs. Graham Pettigrew, an integral part of the society in which he lived. He grew to be greatly respected by his neighbours and was considered to be a man of erudition, with a great love of research. If younger and more active dwellers in Ashtead (who worked, daily, in London offices) were critical as to his way of life, their opinion mattered nothing, since they were not of the older and select society in which James Pettigrew moved. Among the Victorians and his mother's friends he was supposed to be writing a book—or, at least, collecting material for a book—a form of activity both distinguished and respectable.

For thirty years he lived at Sunny Lea; and, except for periodical visits with his mother to Bournemouth or to Tunbridge Wells, he was little out of Ashtead, save for the hours spent at his club. Even at the Trireme Club

he was rarely to be seen at dinner. "Old people," as he would say in excuse for a rejected invitation, "do not like to be alone in the evening."

It is easy to live long in a place and yet see little of it, and James Pettigrew was blind to the beauty of the place in which he lived. Whether he walked in Ashtead Wood or by the banks of the Mole, he saw but the sheen of white sunlight on dome or minaret; the hot, baked earth; the red sunset on the desert sand, and heard but the talk and clatter of the bazaar; the cries of the camel men; the chant of the Muezzin proclaiming that there is no god but God.

Mrs. Pettigrew was buried with all the ceremony that was her due. After the funeral, James Pettigrew left Ashtead for Tunbridge Wells, where he remained for some six weeks. He then returned to Sunny Lea. The faithful and excellent Harding kept house for him; and his mother's death seemed to have made little immediate change in his way of life.

He was to be seen, however, more often at the club. He stayed, at times, to dinner, and even on occasion occupied a club bedroom for a night. Also, he made a change in his reading, and Baedeker's "Mediterranean" or "Palestine and Syria" were more frequently in his hands than Burton or Morier. He was to be seen at lunch with the Continental Bradshaw open before him. "Baedeker," he would murmur, "is not very helpful, and the Asia Minor is only published in German; unhappily, I do not read German. To one about to travel in the East, and without any experience in Oriental travel; some reliable guide-book is a *sine qua non*. Perhaps, sir, you are acquainted with the Near East?"

One day in late spring, some six months after his mother's death, I found James Pettigrew dining at the Trireme Club in a state of (for him) some little excitement. A small pile of papers and pamphlets, time-tables, and a Baedeker's Handbook lay at his elbow on the table, and he showed me, with no little pride, a passport decorated with the stamps of half-a-dozen consulates.

"I leave for Paris to-morrow," he told me, almost before

the preliminaries of conversation were over, "by the eleven o'clock from Victoria."

"At this time of the year," I remarked, "Paris is delightful."

"I shall not stay there any time; a night, or two nights, at the most—then to Constantinople . . . Asia Minor . . . Damascus."

"You will make an extended tour?" I suggested.

"I may be away a year or eighteen months," he said, with satisfaction.

I escaped from Pettigrew as soon as I could do so without offence. He would have talked to me, I believe (I am in the India office), half the night. I had a long morning next day and did not reach the club until half-past one. I went up to the smoking-room for a sherry and bitters before luncheon. As I entered the room I heard a familiar voice saying: "A cup of black coffee; a small cup of black coffee and a glass of plain water."

I walked across the room to Pettigrew.

"I thought you were half-way to Paris by now," I said.

"I had to miss my train," he replied, brusquely; "some urgent business . . . it is most annoying. I fear I will have to postpone my departure for a day or two."

He made no effort to talk; for which I was glad. A little later, while I was drinking my sherry and bitters, I heard him talking to Patten.

"I hope I am not disturbing you?"

"Not at all, sir."

"Then, will you be so good as to bring me the 'Hajji Baba,' and—er—the 'Ibn Haukal'?"

It is now four years since the death of Mrs. Graham Pettigrew, but if, any afternoon, you go into the Trireme Club about half-past one o'clock the chances are two to one that you will find James Pettigrew in his chair behind the revolving bookcase; and the chances are at least equal that you will hear him send for Patten and say: "I should be obliged if you will bring me the Burton."

"Yes, sir; the sixth volume, sir?"

"Er—yes; yes; volume six, if you please."

If you have nothing particular to do and so get into

talk with him: if, moreover, you have been in the East and are not unsympathetic, he will say:

"I have always much desired to go to the East. It has long been my ambition—but, unhappily, my mother —" (here he will take a large silk handkerchief from his pocket and blow his nose violently)—"er—since my mother's death, responsibilities have devolved upon me—property has—er—claims as well as privileges. I hope, in a few years, to be—er—more at liberty—but at the moment I am unable to leave England for any length of time."

# DEATH OF THE JESTER[1]

By W. L. GEORGE

(From *The Century Magazine*)

IT was half-past three. By the round table sat two men, meditating among the ruins of an admirable lunch. In some confusion lay the gaily figured Spode plates, strewn with the shells of nuts, the stalks of raisins. In a few of the many glasses remained the sediment of historic port. Decanters and silver reflected themselves in the polished mahogany of the table; they were arrayed about the golden figure of a jester in cap and bells, holding out a copy of *Laughter*. *Laughter* was the most ancient of the English comic papers; it had looked upon the birth of *Punch* as a trifling intrusion.

The weekly lunch of the contributors to *Laughter* was done, the sacred lunch, where the next week's issue was planned, where information promoting merriment was exchanged, where old stories were remembered, and new ones invented. All the members of the staff had gone, their professional guffaws echoing down the stairs. There remained only the editor, Sir John Corve, and the middle-page cartoonist, Winstone. They were in a reflective mood, having eaten and drunk well. They were, indeed, a little tired from having been funny for two hours, and a little tired also from having had to submit to other people being funny. They knew each other very well, these two, the monstrously fat Sir John, with eyes as twinkling,

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wicked, and penetrating as those of a pig; and the gray cartoonist, as smart and nimble as a sparrow.

"That was a good woodcock," reflected Sir John aloud. "Plenty of blood in it. You young men, of course, you've no use for those strong meats. A grilled sole, the wing of a chicken, a little soda-water plain, that's your generation, Winstone."

That cartoonist laughed.

"Sorry, Sir John. We haven't the constitution of our founder nowadays. Though I think you're laying it on a bit thick; Yarford's wit flourishes merrily on Sauterne and biscuits, even though he was born in the year dot. And as for old Wroxall!"

"Yes," replied Sir John, meditatively, "eating has gone, drink is going, tobacco is threatened. Winstone, it'll be the end of humor. One can't be funny in cold blood unless one's Scotch—or American. I was saying so to poor old Wroxall."

"Poor old Wroxall!" repeated Winstone.

"Do you know," said Sir John, sitting up and seizing the port decanter, "it's a funny thing, Winstone, but we've both said 'poor old Wroxall.' Now, why?"

"Well—he's getting old. We all do. Yarford, for instance."

"Oh, no Winstone; not at all. Yarford's never been better. Last week his set of letters between the suburban resident and the railway company on 'When should a canary be charged for as a cat?' Well, he made me laugh; and, you know, I'm in training when it comes to a joke. You can't just press a button and make *me* laugh. That Australian cartoonist, too; capital fellow. But poor old Wroxall! He's going down."

"No wonder," said Winstone. "Do you know how old he is, Sir John? Seventy-eight. Looked him up in 'Who's Who' the other day."

"Is he, indeed? He came on the paper twelve years before I did, and I've been on—let me see. Hang it all! Winstone, the old man must have been with us forty-eight years. Forty-eight years of humor!"

"And still lives."

"Winstone, don't be cynical. It's the wrong tone for *Laughter*. Forty-eight years! No wonder he's worn out."

"I'm afraid so," said Winstone. "You wouldn't believe it, but to-day he told me that aged joke about the fat old lady who tried to get out of the train at every station, but being slow—"

"And having to get out backward," cried Sir John, "the guard pushed her back every time. Dear me! Now I come to think of it, somebody said one must live, and the poor old boy replied that he didn't see the need of it."

"Prehistoric, isn't it?"

"What the deuce are we going to do with him? Can't sack him. Can't sack a man after forty-eight years' work."

"Pension him," says Winstone.

"It would kill him." Sir John gazed at the golden figure before him and murmured: "Cap and bells! When a man puts those on he can't get 'em off unless you take the head off, too. Well, we must see what happens."

Old Humphrey Wroxall had taken the first train home to his house in the country, twenty miles out of London. He hated London now, and came up only for the weekly *Laughter* lunch. The town tired him. The motor-cars, motor-omnibuses, the shouting newsboys, the people who rushed and shoved on the narrow pavements—all this exhausted him. On lunch days, when he came home, he always found on his desk, placed there by his wife, a comforting glass of egg and milk. Now he sat at this desk, so ink-stained that it was covered with black patches, and looked beyond his small orchard to the equable fields, cut up by hedges. It rose slowly toward the common, flecked with golden gorse that was cut out against the blue sky-line. It was hot. He wiped his damp brow. He was so tired that he rested his long, thin, bearded head upon his bony hands. He wasn't in the mood to be amusing. He suddenly realized himself as old. It was strange, for he had never been ill; he had never thought of age, life had been so varied, so amusing. It had been such fun making fun. Even the idea of death was funny, in so far as he had left with his lawyer a comic will.

And a comic epitaph lay in a drawer. He murmured: "I'm not dead yet. One's got to live until one dies." He chuckled and thought: "Not exactly the sort of remark they want in *Laughter*. No, must think of something else."

He looked up. Still the country lay placid; not even cattle in the fields; no birds in the still heaven; no noise in the house. Only the emptiness in which, as a rule, his kindly wit worked all by itself. He felt inclined not to work that day, but he knew that this would be unwise, that he ought to set up something new to revise and polish next day, until the time came to deliver. He must be funny. A whole column must be filled with fun. Funny about what?

For a moment his mind was entirely void; his effort emptied it of ideas. He found himself thinking of mothers-in-law. His pride reacted against this commonplace. Golf? One could be funny about golf. Curates? Oh, no; not that. Not curates. Then the mother-in-law recurred. Wroxall was being pursued by the faded jokes that have wearied the centuries.

The old man stood up. This wouldn't do at all. He must think of something new, always something new. Then his blue eyes twinkled. Why not write about a man who wanted to find something new? New games, new foods, new love. By jove! that would do. He sat down and began to write. New foods was lovely. Why not beetles? Humphrey Wroxall laughed aloud as his pen ran. He finished the rough draft in half an hour. He particularly liked one phrase, "Old wine in new bottles." Then he read it over. Yes, not bad. That joke about the new policeman refusing to take supper with the cook. Ha! ha!

Then the study door opened to admit Mrs. Wroxall, who warned him that tea was nearly ready. Gaily, he kissed the old lady, and went to his room to wash, pushing the manuscript into his pocket. He knew what he wanted to do with it—to read it to her, of course. As usual they took tea, and while he talked of the *Laughter* lunch, the event of the week, told her who was there, and how

Winstone had kept them in a roar, she watched him, tolerant and amused. She was a fat, pink old lady of seventy, with crisp white curls; she thought him absurd and delightful, and, hardly listening, saw that he had sugar and milk, and spread him jam-sandwiches. Toward the end of the meal she said, as she always said:

"Have you prepared anything, Humphrey?"

"Yes, of course," he replied, as casually as ever.

"How is it shaping?" said Mrs. Wroxall, as usual.

"Oh, I think it'll do."

"Anything specially good in it?" said Mrs. Wroxall, invitingly, in her invariable tone.

"You must judge for yourself, my dear, when you read it in *Laughter*."

"Humphrey! you aren't going to make me wait with the rest of the public, are you?"

He patted her hand.

"My dear, if you put it like that, I'll read it to you."

"Do."

The old man read his manuscript, and at the proper intervals Mrs. Wroxall tittered, giggled, and exploded. Her old husband read dramatically, driving in his points. He need not have; Mrs. Wroxall had been laughing with him for a lifetime. When he had done, she said:

"I never heard anything so funny."

"Do you really mean it?"

"Of course I mean it. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I don't know." He stood up. "I'm tired, somehow; but I won't talk about that. You do like it, old lady, don't you?" He bent down to kiss her cheek, and she pressed his hand with awkward affection.

Humphrey Wroxall felt uncertain. He went over his manuscript again. He didn't like it so much as before.

That bit about the new baby that likes milk pudding was all right, but clumsy. Oh, well, he'd polish it; it'd be all right. He grew angry. Hang it all! *Laughter* didn't pay him a million a week. They must take what he gave them.

All the same, Humphrey Wroxall was rather sad that evening as he read a new book on conchology, which was

his strange hobby. He woke up once in the night, and immediately was seized by the horrid doubts that come in the weakness of that hour: Was that article good? Was it funny? He nearly came to wonder whether his stuff was as funny as it had been. The idea was so horrible that cold sweat covered his face. But the evil brought its remedy; after a time nervous exhaustion told upon his old body, and he slept.

Next morning, as the manuscript still worried him, he put it into his pocket. He took the train to the neighbouring town, where he had business. He tried to concentrate on what he would say to the landlord, on the arguments he would use; but this did not drive out the preoccupation. In his compartment sat only a big schoolboy of about sixteen, shaped like a bladder of lard; one of those round-headed, close-cropped, staring-eyed boys. As old Wroxall nervously wriggled in his seat, the boy kept on him an eye as surprised as that of a lobster. He obviously expected his companion to do something strange. After a time the stare made Humphrey Wroxall so uncomfortable that he talked to his fellow-traveler. It was not an interesting conversation. Was the boy going to school? Yes. Did he go up every morning? Yes. Did they play games at his school? Yes. Which did he like best? Foot-ball. Wroxall obtained a satisfactory answer only when he asked the boy what he spent his pocket money on, for the reply was, "Comics."

"Comics," said Wroxall, breathing comfortably. "Comic papers, you mean? I suppose you read *Laughter?*"

"No."

"No? Why?"

"Too dear."

"Yes, of course. Well, you'll be able to afford it when you grow up." The boy showed no emotion. "But do you mean to say you've never read a copy?"

"No." The boy laconically replied.

"Would you like to?"

"I don't mind."

"I haven't got one handy, but—" Humphrey Wroxall slightly swelled—"I happen to be one of the contributors

to *Laughter*. In fact, I've got next week's contribution in my pocket. I can read it to you if you like." As the boy made no reply, Wroxall read him the manuscript. Line by line, as he read, the thing seemed more leaden. Also, he read to a cold house. This sort of boy ought to guffaw, but he did not even smile, and Wroxall's voice seemed to get shriller and shriller as he bellowed in the railway carriage to make the boy see the jokes. There was no response. As the train drew up at the station, the boy stood up, still silent, still unsmiling, and got out without saying good morning. Humphrey Wroxall stopped for a moment to talk to the station master, whom he knew. The memory of the dull boy oppressed him. He asked a question.

"That young gentleman?" said the station master. "Born idiot? Oh, no, sir; not at all, sir. He's one of the monitors at the school. And he's a literary young gentleman, too. Runs the school magazine. Perhaps you've seen a number, sir; it would fair make you split your sides."

The old jester went through the town forgetting his appointment. He was blank rather than unhappy. He couldn't understand what was happening. He was not so much thinking of his recent failure as confronting the non-understandable. Something was affecting him. He did not at once tell himself that his wit was failing. He was too amused by life, and even in his misery he could not help giggling at a dog that, having put its head through railings, was now wedged there by its collar. Then an idea came with incredible suddenness: yes, he was still amused, but no longer amusing. He could feel humor, but he could not translate it.

The old man stood for a long time before the town hall, trying to find his way in the ruined edifice of his pride. Give it up? How could he give it up? What would they live on? Go on, of course; but he saw much too clearly. Go on, get duller. Other people'd see it, too. But though old Wroxall knew all this, he did not believe it. This was a mistake. Or it was temporary. After all, his wife had laughed, and he could not suspect her. "Don't

be a fool," he remarked to himself, roughly; "of course she'd laugh." Then tears formed in his eyes. Horrified by his own weakness, he went up the street very fast, swinging his arms, and appealing incoherently to the remote god of jesters to throw once more his gay fillet of irony across the rough contours of an obvious world.

Humphrey Wroxall did, after all, see his landlord that day. He arrived late, but his excitement, his fears, seemed to have reacted into aggressiveness. It was a charming morning. The landlord gave way on the repairs to the roof, abandoned his old objection to the cutting down of the apple-tree which shut out the view. Old Wroxall went home triumphant, so triumphant that he revised his column and laughed at it in a most satisfactory way. The article appeared as usual. No comment was made by the sub-editor. But when Wroxall saw it in print he didn't like it as much as before. So the next week he began his work in greater anxiety. Now, instead of fearing failure, he felt that he had failure behind him; the contagion of failure was spreading to the work of the moment. This time he took two days to find an idea. The revision was awful; he knew there was no spring in these jokes. He did not tell his wife; the partner in his success could not become his fellow-fugitive in a rout. Now he forced humor from himself as one struggles to draw juice from an exhausted fruit. Soon he was going up to the London which tired him, striving to find in shop windows and faces some incident leading to an idea. He found it, but it was as if he found it in his own blood. One day he was so spent that he went into a tea-shop, breaking his old habit not to eat between meals.

He sat there for some time, very hot, almost at ease because his despair had turned to flatness. At last, as if newspaper that some one had left on a chair. He glanced to repel the thought which came back, he picked up a at various items without interest; the newspapers did not excite him as much as they used to. He concluded that life was less stimulating than it had been in his youth. Unconsciously, he turned to the advertisement columns, and read suggestions of limejuice, furniture, indigestion

cures. Oh, how dull everything was! Then, among the small advertisements, he found the following:

"WIT and WISDOM." 3 vols.
As new. What offers?

A little ache that was half-pleasure went through him. *Wit and Wisdom*, by Jove! He read the advertisement again. Why, the fellow must have the complete collection, since the publication had lasted only eighteen months. The old man went off into a day-dream. He had been a contributor to the long-dead comic weekly which bore the name of *Wit and Wisdom*. He was only twenty-three then, and they had not only printed his first works of humor, but he had stayed with *Wit and Wisdom* until it expired.

"I wish I'd kept the copies," thought the old man. "For in those days,

Oh, once I had my fling!
I romped at jing-go-ring;
I used to dance and sing,
And play at everything.

"Yes, I was young. I didn't bother." He sighed. A sentimental impulse seized him. He'd like to read *Wit and Wisdom* again, the old paper, half a century dead; just to finger once more the square pages. Resolutely he got up, and went to the post-office to send a wire.

It was new life, and old life, going through those three volumes in the evening. The sight of the date itself, so long ago, when men were witty and girls were fair, when young fellows didn't smoke in the presence of ladies, and when women looked like swans, with their lovely bustles! Yes, decadence had set in. He sank further and further into sentimental melancholy as *Wit and Wisdom* brought up the old days, the old quips at Gladstone and Disraeli. There was even a parody of Mr. Charles Dickens. Lord! how funny that was! His own stuff delighted him, too. It was fresh after fifty-five years, and a few of the articles brought up a memory. The first suggested his old friend Herbert, who drank such a lot of Marsala at Willis's rooms one night, and went down Piccadilly singing "Champagne Charlie" and threatening to fight a policeman. And, oh,

this! He'd got the idea from Maisie, with the yellow hair and the black eyes. Maisie? But was her name Maisie? So long ago! Then Wroxall remembered that all this was past, and that he lived in the present, must make the best of it. *Wit and Wisdom* had never had any circulation; nobody knew it, and its proprietor was so ashamed of his failure that he had burned the stock and broken the plates. Let it rest. The old man bent down to his desk, where lay the blank paper that he must fill.

His mind was empty still. Once more the obvious began to haunt him. Once more, straining his old muscles, with starting eyes, his brow damp, he began to write. Yes, that would do. Oh, no; what nonsense! Still he went on, and the paper blackened. He did not quite know what he was doing; the stuff seemed to have no sense, and still it spun itself out, until, in sudden revolt, he flung his pen down and cried aloud, "I can't go on!"

For a moment he stayed in the icy solitude of his decision. All was over. He coudn't write for *Laughter* any more. How could he, when there was no laughter left in his mind? The young jester of *Wit and Wisdom* was dead, and only his shell walked. He absorbed himself for some time in his despair. He tried not to despair. He could do something else. There lived seriousness in him, as well as humor. Memoirs, of course; he could write his memoirs. He'd known such lots of people! But, as he smiled, he knew that was not the same thing as the delicious haste of every week; that memories of the past, however gay, held not the gaiety of comments on the present time. He felt near weeping. The three volumes of *Wit and Wisdom* looked misty through his clouded eyes.

Suddenly, shame irradiated Humphrey Wroxall; it was as if his soul blushed. He said, "No! no!" and put out a hand, as if to push something away. But the thing wouldn't go away, and a steady trembling threaded the old man's limbs. "No, I can't," he protested to the invisible tempter. He sat like this for some time, locked in an awful struggle. At last he flung himself upon his knees, brokenly appealing to God to help him, to prevent his doing this.

But when at last the old jester painfully rose from his knees, with bent head and a furtive glance at the door, he took up the first volume of *Wit and Wisdom* and began his search.

That first struggle preluded many more, but every time the effort was less, as if the tempter, by prevailing once, found his victim easier to overcome. Humphrey Wroxall tried very hard. He had given way the first week; he had copied out one of his old articles in *Wit and Wisdom,* and it had been well received; for the first time in many months Sir John Corve had congratulated the old man. That was horrible, to sell his old jokes over again; it was like stealing. It was so horrible that, after the second week, he produced a new idea and locked the three volumes in a trunk. But Sir John said that though the new stuff would do, it wasn't quite so good as in the two previous weeks. What could Humphrey Wroxall do but again give himself up to the tempter? It couldn't be helped. He had to sell his pride. So now, struggling less every week, he served up to *Laughter* the humors half a century old. With malignant pleasure he even substituted for the names of authors and players long forgotten those of the day; he began to take a pride in his deceit. He enjoyed his finesse. After all, to deceive well, there was skill in that.

At first he feared exposure. Suppose somebody remembered those old humors of his? He tried them on his wife, but she laughed at them as at something new. Even his oldest friends had forgotten; this vaguely outraged him. But he was soon to know a new fear: the first six months of *Wit and Wisdom* produced contributions to only six months of *Laughter.* Obviously, the next year would absorb the rest of his old jokes. And then? What then? Wroxall did not discuss this question with himself, but he knew that one thing he would not do: he would not use the jokes of other men. His own, yes; that, after all, was only a new edition. What would he do? At first this worried him. He saw himself with only eleven months before him, then with ten, now only nine. What would he do when those old reserves were exhausted? It was agony when only six months were left in this race.

But little by little, as the winter wore into another summer, a coma settled upon the old man. Week by week he stole for the new men laughter from the store which had cheered their grandfathers; like the improvident grasshopper, he laid up no store for the cold time to come. He grew duller, slower, sleepier. Sir John could not understand how this man, sliding into extreme age, could week by week produce such amusing stuff. Still, so long as he succeeded, it didn't matter.

At last there came a time when Humphrey Wroxall turned the last page of the last issue of *Wit and Wisdom.* Before him lay his complete copy. It was done. He had exhausted his reserves. He felt neither fear nor pain, nor care for the morrow. His body was numb; his mind felt incredibly light; he lived, and it was as if he lived not, so little did his coat weigh upon his back, so immaterial was the wooden desk under his hand. Slowly he closed and stamped the envelope over the last manuscript, and remained staring at the last page of *Wit and Wisdom.* He smiled, for the person who had collected the bound volumes had written on the last page, as an epitaph to the defunct publication, *"Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine."*

"Now dismiss Thy servant, Oh, Lord!" murmured Humphrey Wroxall, and quietly closed the book.

Sir John Corve stood in the long grass, holding Mrs. Wroxall's black-gloved hand, and pressed it gently.

"We are all very sorry, Mrs. Wroxall," he said. "All of us."

"Yes, I know," said the old lady.

"It was so sudden," said Sir John. "My dear old friend to die like that! I can hardly believe it. Mrs. Wroxall, it may not be much of a consolation to you, but I'd like to tell you this: your husband was wonderful. At seventy-nine he had all the lightness of his wit while young men were failing. Just for a moment, two years ago, I thought he was flagging a little. But it was nothing; just a temporary weariness, I should say, for he pulled himself together at once. Indeed, during the last year or two I felt he'd never been so brilliant."

# THE STRANGER[1]

By RICHARD HUGHES

(From *The Weekly Westminster Gazette*)

## I

THE street in Cylfant was so steep that if you took a middling jump from the top of the village you would not touch ground again till you reached the bottom: but you would probably hurt yourself. The houses sat on each other's left shoulder all the way up, so that the smoke from Mrs. Grocery-Jones's chimney blew in at Mrs. Boot-Jones's basement, and out through her top windows into the cellar of the Post Office, and out through the Post Office Daughter's little bedroom casement into that of the Butchery Aunt (who was paralysed and lived downstairs); and so on, up the whole line like a flue, till it left soot on the stomachs of the sheep grazing on the hill-side above.

But that does not explain why the Stranger came to Cylfant village, unless it was through curiosity; nor, indeed, what he was doing in such a Sabbath-keeping little Anabaptist hamlet at all, where he might have known he would meet with an accident; nor what he was doing so far from home.

Mr. Williams was the rector of Cylfant, and perhaps thirty miles round: such an old fat man that he had difficulty in walking between his different churches on Sundays. His face was heavy, his eyes small but with a dream in them, and he kept sticky sweet things ready in his pocket. He was stone-deaf, so that now he roared like a bull, now whispered like a young lover. He might

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be heard roaring across a valley. He had one black suit, with patches on it; and one surplice, that he darned sometimes. He lived by letting the rectory in the summer; and when the Disestablishment Bill wiped away his stipend of eight pounds he made up for it by taking in washing; you would see him in front of the rectory, legs set well apart, both heavy arms plunged up to the elbows in suds, a towel pinned to each shoulder to save his black coat, roaring a greeting to all who might pass.

Cylfant was very proud of the smallness of his congregation; for in Wales to have many Church people in a village is a great disgrace. They are always the scallywags, the folk who have been expelled from their chapels; and who hope, even if they cannot expect Heaven, that things will not be quite so uncomfortable for them in the next world as if they gave up religion altogether. There were only three families, except for the Squire's governess, that ever came to Cylfant Church. Mr. Williams hated verse, but he preached them pure poetry; he had such an imagination that if he meditated on the anatomy of angels there seemed to be strange flying things about his head; and the passionate roaring and whispering of his voice could hang Christ even on the polished brass altar cross.

Presently he married the girl who played the harmonium; but she had one leg.

It was she, Minnie, that took in the Stranger. They were sitting one night in the rectory parlour, and Mr. Williams was reading a book of sermons with great fixity of mind, in order to forget his Loss: for that day the little ring on his watch-chain had opened, and he had lost the gold cross that he had always carried. Minnie was sure that it had been there when they started to climb the village; but they had no lantern; the wind was a fleet, howling darkness, so they could not search till the morning, even if it lay on their very doorstep. Mr. Williams read three sermons at a gulp, and closed the book. It was always a thing of amazement that a man who read such dull sermons with avidity could put so much thrill and beauty, so little of the moralities, into his own preaching.

He shut the book; and, giving a great sigh, puffed out his cheeks, while he squinted along the broad shirt-front under his chin. Minnie went to turn down the lamp—as she always did, for reasons of thrift, when her husband was not actually reading; and all at once she heard a cry in the night, sharp as a child's, and full of terror and innocence. She opened the door, and saw a small huddled figure in the roadway. There was a little light shining from it, bluish and fitful; and she knew at once it was something more than natural. She set her wooden leg firmly against the doorstep, and bending down, caught the Stranger up in her arms, and lifted him over the threshold. He lay there, blinking in the lamplight—a grotesque thing, with misshapen ears and a broad flat nose. His limbs were knotted, but the skin at his joints was yellow and delicate as a snake's belly. He had crumpled wings, as fine as petrol upon water; even thus battered their beauty could not but be seen. He seemed in pain; and there was a small cross-shaped weal burnt on his side, as if he had stumbled on a little red-hot iron.

"Poor little thing," said Mr. Williams, looking at it sideways from his chair. "What is it?"

"It is more ugly than anything I have ever seen," said Minnie; "perhaps it is an angel; for it was never born of woman."

"We should be more humble, Minnie," said her husband. "Who are we that God should send His angels to try us?"

"At any rate, I think it is not," said Minnie. "We will see."

She took up the book of sermons, and touched him on the forehead with it. He gave a shrill yell of pain.

"God forgive me for my cruelty," she exclaimed: "it must be a—"

"It is a Stranger," said Mr. Williams quickly.

Minnie turned and looked at him.

"What shall we do?" she shouted in his ear, "for if we harbour it we shall surely be damned. We must not help God's enemies."

"We are taught to love our enemies," whispered Mr. Williams; "and who is God's enemy is ours too."

"But it can feel no gratitude," said Minnie. "It will return us evil for good."

"If we do good in the hope of gratitude we have our reward," roared Mr. Williams.

"You mean you will keep him?" said Minnie.

"I mean—" the old man groaned; "I do not know what to do indeed whatever!"

But the visitor settled that question for them himself. He crawled over to the fireplace, and sitting himself on one of the reddest coals, smiled out at them with a grin that stretched from ear to ear.

## II

That was how the little devil came to Cylfant rectory. He had great natural charm, and when the cross-shaped weal on his side was better—for it healed quickly under the action of fire—his spirits returned to him. One was led to forget the grotesque beauty of his form by the generous amiability of his expression. He took to the old rector at once; and Mr. Williams himself could not but feel a secret liking for him. That night he followed them up to bed; Mr. Williams had to shut and lock the bedroom door on him. But hardly were they inside when they saw a bluish light on the panel; and presently the little devil was sitting perched upon the bedrail, watching with sober interest Minnie unstrap her wooden leg; and even when she said her prayers—which she did in a shamefaced fashion, for fear of giving him pain—he showed no embarrassment whatever. When they were both fast asleep, he took down Minnie's old leg from the shelf where she had laid it, and did something to it in the corner. He then lay down in a pool of moonlight, and was still sleeping soundly when the rector heaved himself out of bed in the morning. The old man woke Minnie, who scrambled out of bed, and began to strap on her leg preparatory to getting the breakfast; but a wonderful thing happened,

for no sooner had she fitted her scarred stump into the leather socket than the leather changed to flesh, and the wood to flesh, and there she was with the most elegant and seductive leg that ever troubled a man's eye; and, moreover, there was a silk stocking on it, and a high-heeled Paris shoe on it, before she could recover from her surprise. As she drew on her old ringed black-and-white cotton oddment over the other stocky red ankle she thought that never had such a pair of legs been seen together on one body. She looked round in a guilty fashion; but her husband was balanced in front of the looking-glass shaving himself. He had not seen. She pulled on her dress all in a hurry and danced away downstairs. She let up the blinds and swept the floor; and all the time her new leg behaved as well as if she had known it all her life; but directly she flung open the front door to shake the mat it began all at once to drag and jib; she got pins and needles in it; it jumped and kicked like a thing quite out of control. And she saw the reason; for there in the roadway, where she had found the Stranger the night before, was the Rector's gold cross.

"There is no mistaking," said Minnie to herself, "where *that* leg came from."

And indeed there was not. She sidled up to the cross with difficulty, and recovered it; and all at once she heard steps on the cobbles. It was Scraggy Evan, the postman. Minnie's first thought was to hide the leg, for it would take some explaining away. But it would not be hidden; the shameless thing thrust the delicate turn of its ankle right under Scraggy Evan's nose. Scraggy's cheery *"bore da"* was lost in a gasp, and poor Minnie fled into the house scarlet with shame, the damnable leg giving coquettish little kicks into the air as she went.

What Scraggy told the village we can only guess; but he must have told them something, or why should Mrs. Williams have received so many callers that morning? The first came when breakfast was hardly over; and the Stranger was sitting quietly on the hob, picking his teeth with his tail. Minnie had great presence of mind. She ran to her workbox, and, taking from it a red flannel

petticoat that she had been mending, wrapped the Stranger in it and crammed him quickly into a wooden box, begging him in a staccato whisper to lie still. Upon the face of Mr. Williams there was a look of much courage and resignation. Devil or no, he was prepared to justify his guest to all comers. Minnie opened the door, and Mrs. Grocery-Jones stood there.

"Good-morning," said she. "I was calling to ask you are driving over to Ynysllanbedrbachydeudraethgoch to-day."

She paused and sniffed; then sniffed again.

There was no doubt of it; somewhere sulphur was burning.

"We are not," said Minnie; "we are too busy here, indeed, with the plaguey wasps. Mr. Williams has hardly smoked out one nest, but bad are they as they were before indeed."

Mrs. Jones gave a gasp of surprise.

"Wasps in the winter-time, whatever?" she said.

"I did not say wasps," said Minnie. "I said the wall-paper, which the doctor thinks may have the scarlet fever lurking in it, so have we fumigated the whole house."

It was lucky, thought Minnie, that her husband was so deaf. He would never have forgiven her.

"Indeed to goodness whatever," said Mrs. Jones. As her eyes got used to the dim light she got sight of a broad head with two beady yellow eyes, peering at her from a soap box. "And is that a cat you have there, Mrs. Williams?"

"It is a pig!" she cried with sudden heat; for her new leg showed an obvious desire to kick Mrs. Jones out of the house. "It has the wind," she explained, "so we thought it would be best in the house, indeed."

"Indeed to goodness!" repeated Mrs. Jones.

Minnie's leg was quivering, but she managed to control it. Mrs. Jones was staring past her at the pig, as if she could not take her eyes off it. As indeed she could not; for suddenly she shot half across the road, backwards, with the force of a bullet; and when released she scrambled down the street, as she herself explained it, "as if the

devil was after me"; and there was the Stranger, wrapped still in the red flannel petticoat, sitting on the window-sill and grinning amiably at her back.

## III

If Mr. Williams had lived longer, a few curious things might have happened in Cylfant village; but he did not. There was a buzzing feeling in his head all that day, and when he went to bed at night he lay quietly on his back, staring at the ceiling. It had turned a bright green. Presently, with his eyes open still, he began to snore. Minnie did not notice anything queer; and in the small hours of the morning, after two or three loud snorts, he stopped altogether.

When he felt better, he found that his soul was outside his body. It was not at all the kind of thing he had expected it to be, but was fairly round, and made of some stuff like white of egg. He gathered it gently into his arms, and began to float about; his body had disappeared. Presently he was aware that the Stranger was still watching him.

"You'll be damned for this; double-damned even, for giving place to the devil—and you a priest." He sighed. "It is so hard," he went on seriously, "even for devils to conquer their better nature. Oh, I *try* hard enough. I surely try. The seeds of goodness have lurked in us ever since the Fall; try as we will they *sprout*.

> 'With a fork drive Nature out
> She will ever yet return.'

Temptation is always lurking ready for us; it is a long and a hard fight: the Forces of Evil against the Forces of Good. But we shall conquer in the end; with Wrong on our side, we must *conquer*." There was an elation in his face that transcended all earthly ugliness. "At last," he went on, "I have done a really immoral act; an act with no trace of good in it, either in motive or effect. You will be damned, and Minnie will be damned too, even if

she has to hop to Hell on the leg I gave her. But it was hard—hard."

Old Williams floated over on to the other side.

"I am a sinful man," he said; "a very sinful man. Heaven was never my deserts, whatever."

The devil looked at him in surprise.

"Oh, you were not!" he said earnestly; "indeed you were not! You were the truest—"

He stopped suddenly. Williams was aware of the presence of some very unpleasant personality. He looked round; and behind him stood a tall figure with thin, tight lips and watery eyes, who began speaking at once—rapidly, as if by rote.

"As a matter of form," said he, "I claim this soul."

"As a matter of form," replied the devil in a sing-song voice, "he is mine."

The angel rapped out: *"De qua causa?"*

*"De diabolo consortando,"* chaunted the little devil, in even worse Latin.

*"Satis,"* answered the angel; *"tuumst";* and he turned to go.

"Stop!" cried the Stranger suddenly, all his bad resolutions breaking down. He would have buttonholed the angel, if angels had buttonholes; but they do not, since they never undress at night.

"Stop!" he cried, and began speaking rapidly. "I'm a backslider, I know, but the strain is too much; there's no true devilry in me. Take him; take him; there was never better Christian in Wales, I swear it; and to that alone his damnation is due; pure charity—"

"What are you talking about?" snapped the angel petulantly. "The case is settled: I have withdrawn my claim."

"So do I!" cried the devil excitedly. "I withdraw mine."

The angel shrugged his wings.

"What's the use of making a scene?" he said. "Never, in all my office, have I known a fiend break down and forget himself like this before. You are making an exhibition of yourself, sir! Besides, if we both withdraw, he can't go anywhere. It's none of my business."

He shrugged his wings and soared away.

"*Heaven or Hell or the Land of Whipperginny,*" murmured Williams to himself, vague memories of Nashe rising to the surface of his astonishment. Together they watched the angel's purple pinions bearing him from sight; the Stranger cocked a snook at his straight back.

"Where now?" asked the Rector.

"Where now? Heaven! Wait till he's out of sight."

He turned and winked broadly at Williams, making a motion on his bare shanks as if to thrust his hand in a pocket.

"You come with me," he said; "I know how I can get things fixed for you!"

# "SOME TALK OF ALEXANDER"[1]

By A. S. M. HUTCHINSON

(From *The Sphere*)

## I

HIS parents called him Hector. When he and Tom and Harry, his brothers, were tiny things, his pretty young mother used to stand them about the piano and sing pretty old-fashioned songs to them. Presently she would beam at her firstborn and cry, "Now Hector's song!" and then the piano would change from the plaintive melodies and thump and jingle out the defiant, blaring strains, and they would all shout:

"Some talk of Alexander, and some of Hercules;
Of HECTOR and Lysander, and such great names as these. . . ."

What fun! How they would all jump about and shout it, while his mother laughed and nodded from the piano! What jolly, jolly fun!

But from the age of twelve, when first he went to boarding school, when first he heard fully of the redoubtable Trojan whose name he bore, acutely aware by then how ill, how grotesquely, it suited him—from then onwards, all his life, how he hated the name! How he loathed and detested the defiant, blaring tune!

Nobody knew how much he hated the name. He hated it so much that, after that first term at school, when the mortification of the thing was new and bitter upon him, he never could respond lovingly to the name on his parents'

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lips. That damped whatever demonstrativeness of affection he ever showed towards his parents, and equally damped whatever depth of affection he ever felt; and neither, as he came out of babyhood, was remarkable. Demonstrativeness and depth, applied to any affair, were two of the many gifts forgotten by the fairies at his christening.

When he was sixteen he was entered with others of his form for the London Matriculation examination. He dreaded the examination, as he always dreaded any ordeal, whether of mind or muscle, but he dreaded much more the public exposure of the hated name entailed by his master checking over the list of candidates before the entries were sent in.

"Tell me if I've got any of your Christian names wrong," said the master; and misery descended upon him whose Christian name was Hector.

"Abney," read the master. "Abney, John. Allen, Henry James. Bartlett, Phillip. Brown, Arthur George. Bywash, Hector."

A titter ran round the class. All the lusty young barbarians—possible Hectors any of them, but bearing such common names as James and Frank and Charles—all looked and grinned at the crimsoned, gawky youth who bore the name of the most valiant of all the valorous Trojans, and who in every line of his face and figure mocked that name to scorn.

One boy among the grinning desks puffed out his chest and drubbed it, and pointed derisively at the hollow chest of Bywash, Hector; another pantomimed in the air, and suggested with wordless lips the hateful tune—

"Some talk of Alexander, and some of Hercules;
Of HECTOR and Lysander, and such great names as these!"

How he hated it! How he hated his name! Why, why didn't the master go on?

The master, an indulgent person—and the formality upon which he was engaged an indulgent interval in the morning's discipline—looked up at the disturbance. He apprehended its cause, and himself contributed a comprehending and sympathetic smile to the mocking grins, whereat the

joke was taken up with loud and noisy delight; and the hatred of his species and of his name, and the smouldering sense of wrong done him by his parents in giving him such a hateful name, flared deeply on Hector's scarlet cheeks.

Everybody enjoyed the joke, and the master joined in it because it *was* a joke that such a fatuous person as Bywash should have such a dashing name as Hector. For Bywash was a notorious ass. The butt of the form. Played no games, had no hobbies, did nothing, knew nothing, chummed with no one, slovenly, shiftless, characterless, gawky, unhealthy—and called Hector!

Ha! ha! ha! What a name! What an ass! "Look out, Bywash!"

Bywash always flinched and ducked when anyone shouted, "Look out, Bywash!" as if he feared something was being chucked at him.

Things very often were chucked at him.

The holidays at this period of his life were not much relief from the unhappiness of school. He passed his time in doing what his father called "lounging about the house." He was not even fond of reading. He wasn't fond of anything. His two brothers were to him precisely of a part with his noisy schoolmates. He was the eldest of the three, but they were at much the better school. They were at Tidborough; he was only at Chovensbury Grammar School. They had won Tidborough scholarships, enabling their education at that famous, and famously expensive, public school to be afforded; he had not won a scholarship, nor ever won a prize in his life, and his lot was the grammar school at Chovensbury. Tidborough ranked with Charterhouse, Winchester, and Rugby, and in the holidays Hector's brothers in many little ways condescended towards Hector with the superiority that any Tidborough boy gave himself over any boy not of the English public schools that can be numbered on the fingers of one hand, let alone the grammar school at Chovensbury!

Hector accepted this position in regard to his brothers. He always accepted any position. Nothing ever seemed to rouse him, or even to interest him. In the holidays (their home was at Alton, eight miles from Tidborough and five

from Chovensbury) Tom and Harry vigorously kept up their school sports, went to parties, and generally robustiously enjoyed themselves within their wide circle of neighbouring friends. Hector lounged about the house.

Then schooldays ended. Tom went into the Army; Harry floated on scholarships to Oxford, thence to enter the Civil Service. Fine boys; their father was proud of them. Hector, far from a fine boy, and evincing not even enough of affection, let alone of talent, to make his father proud of him, was got into an office at Tidborough as a clerk—Wragson's, the big brewers.

His father spoke seriously, though kindly, to him when, at seventeen and a half, he was removed from Chovensbury Grammar School and the clerkship at Wragson's found for him.

"You must begin to assert yourself now, Hector, my boy," his father told him. "You've not done well at school, you know; that's why you're going in for this kind of thing, instead of the careers your brothers are launching out on. You could have had any career you liked, you know, Hector—medicine, the law, the Church, the army—if you had joined hard work and scholarships, as your brothers have, to the very little I am able to provide in the way of money. But you haven't. Well, well, that's all over now, my boy. You mustn't look on this that we've found for you as a come-down, you know. There are as great opportunities for getting on in the world in business as ever there are in the professions Tom and Harry have chosen. Indeed, nowadays, there are much greater possibilities. Captains of industry—merchant princes—you know what the tendencies are nowadays; that's the goal you must set before yourself, my boy; and if you indeed steadily set it before yourself and apply your every effort to achieving it, why in a very few years we shall have you the envy of your brothers and the pride of your old father and your dear mother. Eh? Come, that's the programme, isn't it, my boy? A fresh start, good prospects, and a fine future. Eh, Hector?"

Hector, listening in his lackadaisical, inattentive sort of way, had not responded a word.

His father asked him rather testily: "You like the idea of going into Wragson's, don't you? You see the prospects, don't you?"

"Oh, I don't mind if I do, father," was Hector's response.

His father rather disgustedly closed the interview. "Don't mind if I do!" What a spirit to take it in.

## II

And so schooldays were ended and the start-in-life period begun.

This was the period of youth, of young manhood, and Tom and Harry made much of it. When they were at home for their vacations they were a gay, full-blooded and taking pair, much in demand in all the society round about, and much given to jolly dalliance with the daughters of the countryside. They had between them quite a number of youthful love affairs, harmless, lightly-come and lightly-go affairs such as every properly-constituted young man touches in his student days, and the cause of much genial bantering by their proud and happy father. Entirely different the case with Hector. As in his schooldays he neglected all schoolday sports and interests, so in his youth he developed not the smallest aptitude for youth's affinities and recreations. Hector had lodgings in Tidborough. A fortnight in the year represented his vacation; he spent it at home (still lounging about the house), and it happened that his fortnight never coincided with the dates of the generous vacations of his brothers. Thus within two or three years he quite lost touch with his brothers.

> "Ah, yet doth beauty, like a dial hand,
> Steal from his person with no pace perceived."

As the hands of a clock, ever moving away yet never perceptible in their motion, so—imperceptibly, but very surely—Hector began to move out of relations with his home and with the friends of his home, and new friends he made none. When he was thirty his mother and father

died, in the same year. He was naturally distressed, but his distress did not go very deep or last very long. He simply was not constituted to feel anything deeply or lastingly. He was awfully sorry, and there, in a month, was the end of it, and the absolute end of a good deal more for the matter of that. The hateful "Hector" was now finally and completely cut out of him. His brothers were in India, and both married; his parents were in the churchyard, his old home was sold, all the young broods of neighbours with whom he had been contemporaneous were, like Tom and Harry, spread far away on vigorous wings; he was absolutely alone and absolutely lonely, and that suited him exactly. He was just "Bywash"; by signature, H. Bywash—and H., nine times out of ten, signifies Henry. There remained not so much as a hint of Hector.

He left Wragson's. A very few months at Wragson's had sufficed to show the heads of the firm that this was no budding captain of industry or merchant prince they had accommodated with a stool in their counting-house. Young fellows who came into clerkships about the same time as himself moved across the office floor to stools of increased importance, and ultimately, some of them, from stools into the padded chairs of considerable officers of the firm. Hector remained sluggishly on that he had dropped on to on the first day of his arrival. It was jokingly said that it required an earthquake to move Bywash. In the form of a devastating gale of reorganization which swept through the office, an earthquake shook Wragson's very shortly after the death of his parents, and Hector, a dead-weight in the counting-house, went out before it as chaff before the fan.

He drifted out, much as, twelve years before, he had drifted in. After some aimless idleness he began to drift about in search of new employment. He was for a short time in the publishing office of *The County Times,* for a short time in the clerical department of Fortune, East, and Sabre, the big church and school furnishers. In three years, bringing him to three and thirty, he was in and out of half-a-dozen situations, always at about the same level of drab and listless incompetency; at thirty-five he

drifted into what had the appearance of a permanency—a desk in the office of Miller and Crowdale, the house and estate agents. Here he earned two pounds a week, and here, which exactly suited him, nothing was demanded of him. He merely sat in the office from nine-thirty to one, and from one-forty-five to six, and entered up properties in ledgers or copied them out of ledgers for the information of clients. It was not an employment at which it was easy to make mistakes, or in which mistakes, if they were made, could be very serious. It was just the donkey work of the business, and it was useful to Messrs. Miller and Crowdale to have a proper donkey to do it. Sharp young juniors by whom, previously to his coming, it had been performed, very soon showed aptitude for more alert and intelligent duties, taking inventories, attending auction sales, sizing up values and the like, and then had to be promoted, and other smart young juniors to be found and initiated in their places. Decidedly it was useful to have at the job a steady, dull, middle-aged man, who did no more than he was wanted to do, and for doing it wanted no more than he got.

Hector, therefore, suited, was himself well suited, stayed on, and was likely to stay on. He had, in addition to his two pounds a week, some ninety pounds a year from investments inherited under his father's will. He had no tastes. His only expenditure was his lodging. He only bought clothes when he came through those he was wearing.

At forty, Bywash was perfectly suited by his years. He had never been a boy, and he had never been a youth. In boyhood the qualities of boyhood, and in youth the qualities of youth, had been expected of him, and he had never been able to produce those qualities. At forty, nothing was expected of him, and that suited him precisely. At forty, he never used a clothes-brush, and not every day a razor. At forty, looking upon his purposeless mien, his vacant eyes, and his neglected mind, one might say that the Creator, with high and ardent hopes planning in his own image the young body and the young mind that first had been here, had faltered in his interest and abandoned it and gone away. . . .

At forty, Mr. Bywash had no vices and no virtues. He was merely negligible. Nothing interested him, nothing caused his pulses to quicken. The result of the Derby or of the boat-race, the sonnets of Wordsworth, the spires of Tidborough Cathedral springing up into the sky, the bustle and gleam of Tidborough's commercial streets by night when pleasure and business were abroad, or May or October arranging their glories upon the countryside, these things were nothing to Mr. Bywash. Nothing was anything to Mr. Bywash.

And suddenly, at forty, thus circumstanced, thus equipped, and thus inclined, astounding and tremendous things began to happen to him.

## III

They began with the very beginning of his annual fortnight's holiday taken in this forty-first year of his age—poignant and mysterious and terrific and frightful things: emotions that presented at white heat all those ardent emotions he should have known in his youth and never had known; emergencies that called for all those powerful qualities of mind and muscle, of action and of courage, which in his young manhood he should have developed and husbanded, and of which he never had so much as considered the use, let alone practised and encouraged.

He took this holiday, as he had taken twenty before it, at the great seaport town of Stormouth, an hour's run from Tidborough on the main line from London. Bywash waited on the platform for the down train. No one, observing him, would have supposed he was holiday-bound. He went on holiday as he went about everything else, without the smallest enthusiasm. His way of spending it was to take a cheap room, and either to lounge through the day within doors if the weather was dull, or to droop listlessly about the Prince's Park or on the sea-front if the weather was fine.

The train roared in. Everybody quickened up and bustled. People greeted people or took leave of people. People rushed about looking for accommodation. People alighted and charged about after luggage. Boys bawled newspapers and refreshments. Porters thundered trucks towards and away from the baggage vans. The engine contributed a tremendous and spectacular din of escaping steam. Mr. Bywash, the sole emotionless figure, merely drifted towards the coach that had halted nearest him and drifted in. He scarcely noticed the occupants whom he joined beyond that they were two, a man and a woman, seated side by side opposite him and at the further corner. The train started. He looked out of the window against which he sat. The train rushed on. He remained looking out, seeing, for all that the countryside conveyed to his mind, as much or as little as if a blank wall had flanked the permanent way.

When the train had run about twenty minutes he altered his position, and made to look across the carriage through the further window. Then he noticed his companions. The man was a huge, obese creature, with a heavy, brutish face. He was got up in a horsey way. He was of the rough publican or bookmaker type. He had enormous hands, great, big, red sledge-hammer hands. His mouth was tightly pursed as though he desired to show that he had no intention of speaking. His face held the expression of a malevolent and threatening smile as though there was some ferocious power that he had that in his chosen time he would exercise. The whole bulk and coarseness and brutality of the man vaguely frightened Mr. Bywash; the heavy and ferocious aspect of him was, to Mr. Bywash, like smelling a bad and sinister odour—it made him feel uncomfortable, alarmed.

> "Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones. . . ."

Some people are susceptible to that kind of thing. Mr. Bywash, far from apprehending messages in nature, had never even the curiosity to read stories in faces. But this savage man's dominating and repellent mien. . . . Why was his mouth thus pursed as though to show he

would not speak? Why in his horrible face that cynical presentment of triumph, of power, that in his chosen time he would exercise? Why? Uncomfortable, apprehensive, fascinated, Mr. Bywash slid his eyes to the ferocious man's companion, to the woman, and knew why, and knew, immediately and poignantly, extraordinary and mysterious and terrible and immoderately alarming sensations.

She was slightly twisted in her seat so that her face was upturned beneath the man's face. Her face was pale. It was pale with a creamy pallor, and it had eyes of dim grey, grey with the pearl and exquisite greyness of the last film that lifts above the dawn, and shining stuff about the lower lids. . . . ("Tears!" thought Mr. Bywash, dreadfully. "Tears! Oh my, she's crying!") And she had soft black hair, low on her temples and upon her brow, as shadows on white roses, that stirred and lifted in the window's breeze like fronds gently waving in the depths of some clear pool. And she was talking, talking, talking. She was *imploring*. That was it. That, with the beauty of her sad face, was what caused these frightful feelings in Mr. Bywash's heart. She was imploring, imploring, imploring. Ceaselessly, piteously, frantically. Mr. Bywash could not hear what she was saying. She was speaking very low, and there was the rushing noise of the train. Scarcely the murmur of her tone was discernible to him. But all too frightfully clear the fact that she was begging, begging, imploring, entreating. It explained the pursed-up lips of that huge and ferocious man. She was imploring a word from him, and he would not speak a word. It explained that horrible look of his, of triumph and of power, that in his chosen time he would exercise. She was in terror of that triumph, in pitiable dismay of that power.

Mr. Bywash watched; and watched with all these mysterious and frightful and never-before-experienced feelings swelling and surging within him, and causing him fear (which he had often felt, but never for such a reason) and aching pity, which he never in his life had felt for anybody, and bewildering, dizzying emotions—yearnings, longings, cravings, high desires of knight errantry, of brave and

reckless actions, which all the women and the situations he had ever seen, or all he had ever read or ever thought, had never caused him even to imagine. Awful sensations. And caused him a separate and most terrible agony, which, appalling in its own individual stress, also roared into white heat (as draught upon a furnace) these frightful flames of pity and of that incredible, dreadful emotion of—whatever it was that the face of the woman caused within him.

Regret was this separate and most terrible agony. Regret, realization, mortification. Regret, realization, mortification for what and of what all he had never been, and now could never become, all he had missed and now never could recover—all he now was, the nerveless, negligible entity he was and that he knew he looked—and all the fine and shining and valorous things that in the furnace of these emotions he most terribly desired to be.

He cried inwardly, he could have cried it aloud, "Oh, dear me!"

He thought, "What would I not be? Oh, what am I?"

There answered him that mock which in his boyhood had so tortured him. The rhythm of the train blared it defiantly and exultingly at him, over and over again, thumping it out, smashing it in:

"Some talk of Alexander, and some of Hercules;
Of HECTOR and Lysander, and such great names as these. . . ."

"Oh, my goodness!" He could have jumped out of the train. . . .

He could have jumped out of the train. He could. He could . . .

"Yes, if you had the pluck!"

These new and frightful emotions that he was suffering had out of their womb conceived within him an articulate entity that could talk, and that was the first thing it said. "Yes, you could jump out of the train to stop that song and to murder your shame you could jump out and end it—if you had the pluck. Ha, ha! If you had the pluck!"

And while he writhed it went on: "And if you had the pluck to jump out, Bywash, you wouldn't want to jump out. If you had the pluck to do that you'd have the pluck

to do splendid things here in the carriage, and you'd have the physical appearance and the physical strength that goes with pluck. You'd get up. You'd somehow intervene. You'd interfere. If need be, you'd strike that hulking brute. You'd protect that poor creature. You'd take her. She'd turn to you, Bywash. She'd admire you, she'd turn to you, she'd cling to you, she'd love you. You'd take her away. She'd be yours, your own. Yours, your darling, and you her dearly loved, her hero—if you had the pluck, Bywash. If only you hadn't been what you've always been. If only you had known the things in life you've never known. If only you hadn't missed all you've missed. If only you hadn't become what you have become. If only you were your brother Harry, Bywash, or your brother Tom. If only—but listen to the train, Bywash, you're not hearing it. Listen!

"Some talk of Alexander, and some of Hercules;
Of HECTOR and Lysander, and such great names as these. . . ."

He said between his lips, "Oh, my God!"

. . . . . .

She was still and ceaselessly at it, imploring, beseeching; and the man basilisk, imperturbable, cynical, sinister, with never a word, with only that abominable indifference, with only that reserved ferocious threat. Anon she would pause, as it were in exhaustion of despair, and shrink away into herself, and Bywash would see, and tremble to see, all her wrought-up spirit, as it were, dissolve away in a terrible sigh, and that shining stuff upon her lower lids fill and discharge itself in a swift crystal flash down her cheeks; and in a moment she would start, as though in horror of the flying moments that she had suffered to fly empty, and urge herself towards him again, and urge again that desperate prayer, that most piteous entreaty. Once she slid her hand—Bywash saw a wedding ring upon it—slid her hand timidly upon those enormous red, swollen, sledge-hammer hands of the man—the gentlest and most touching motion of timid appeal. He jerked up the great fist she had touched and threw her hand violently back upon her lap. The action tore Mr. Bywash to the quick;

and it did other—it frightened him anew of the man. Those terrific sledge-hammer hands, the sight of them and the thought of the terrific things they could do, alarmed him even more than the man's ferocious face alarmed him. They would be the horrible and terrible instruments of all the horrible and terrible violences that Bywash apprehended in the monster.

"Interfere!" mocked the new voice within Mr. Bywash. "Look at those butcher hands of his and interfere. Go on!"

Bywash cowered in his seat, abject.

Once while he stared, and while in the dank and marshy recesses of his soul, like one entombed and frantically searching escape, he wildly sought for sparks of courage; once while he so stared and sought, the man looked up and caught his eye, and directed upon him a full look, and Mr. Bywash with lightning swiftness dropped his eyes and turned away his head, and louder than before the beaten rhythm of the train greeted him:

". . . and some of Hercules;
Of HECTOR and Lysander, and such great names as these!"

He groaned between his lips.

In a little he screwed up courage to look again; and he watched now warily and ready to slip away his eyes at an instant's warning. "Imagine it," mocked the voice. "Imagine it; you daren't even be caught watching!" And once—and this was the most frightful and bitterest moment of all—once the woman ceased her entreaty and made with her hands a little frantic motion of despair and looked swiftly all about the carriage in obvious quest of someone's help. And Bywash was the only other in the carriage. And her eyes just fleeted a moment on his face—fleeted, and were gone, and she made again that little frantic motion of despair.

Oh, bitterest and most frightful moment of all! That glance at him and that immediate turning away from him! As if her face had been a mirror, he saw in that action of hers his negligible and useless self. If only he had been Tom, if only he had been Harry, if only he had been any other than this that he had become. . . .

He cried within himself, "Oh, my God!" He strained within himself anew for any—any—spark of courage. He looked at the man's face and at those awful hands, and there was no single, tiny bit of courage that he could find. . . .

## IV

The train ran into Stormouth terminus. He leaned from the window to turn the handle of the door. It was too stiff for his feeble wrist. He never before had noticed how puny were his arms. He made to add his other hand to the task. The man pushed him unceremoniously aside, flicked open the door without an effort, and stepped out. The woman followed him. Her skirts brushed Bywash. Her knees touched his. It was the first contact with a woman that he had even so much as noticed. It thrilled him terribly, terribly. He made a most frightful effort. He said—and knew it as he said it for the ludicrous squeak that it was—he said, "Can I help you?"

She didn't hear. How should she, terrified as he had been lest the man should hear? She didn't hear. She was gone. She was passing up the platform in the man's wake.

Was he to let her go like this? Oh, not after these terrible and mysterious emotions, this amazing and frightful feeling towards her, that had come at him like unsuspected flame bursting through a suddenly opened door. Oh, not after that! Oh, not with this upon him—these tumults, these revelations, these visions of one tremendous act of glorious courage, these transports of what would then be won—a look, a touch, a word, a bond with her. . . .

Poignant and mysterious things were happening to him; enormous and terrible things were looming up before him. They utterly dismayed him, but they ungovernably fascinated him. He had baggage, but he let it go. He stumbled out of the train, and he pressed anxiously through the busy platforms, and he followed the pair out into the street and through many streets.

The man was walking much too fast for the woman. There was in his great pressing stride and in the massive hulk of his huge shoulders the same air of vengeful purpose and of biding power that his frontal mien in the train had presented; there was in her agitated hurrying and in the droop of her slender figure the same pitiable appeal that first had wrung these frightful tumults out of Mr. Bywash's heart. And she was being hurried to her doom! He would get her within doors somewhere, and then—

Mr. Bywash followed along, keeping safely behind and hating himself for his caution. What was he going to do? He didn't know. But he was nerving himself to do something, and he was knowing as he tried that in all his composition there was nothing wherewith he could nerve himself. He was experiencing all those ardent longings and all those valorous aspirations which spring in young manhood and which young manhood from the self-same sap and root arms and maintains—and he never had had any young manhood! He was an island castaway come upon fabulous treasure and without means to enjoy it. He had suffered to pass without garnering from them the harvests of the years; he now was come to his barns avid for corn and they were empty.

The passage of the pair he followed was through the densely housed and grimy streets of Stormouth's commercial quarter. Mr. Bywash lost his bearings after some fifteen minutes of many crossings. He recovered them again as he found himself approaching the district in which lay that Prince's Park where it had been his habit on former visits to lounge away the hours listening to the band. The couple turned down a street he remembered walking on his way to the park. The houses here were in a solid row on either side. Their doors opened directly on to the pavement by two steps but without approaches. Before one such door the pair halted. Mr. Bywash abruptly halted also, a dozen houses behind. The man opened the door with a key. Mr. Bywash made a great effort at his nerves, and came a few paces on. The man went up the steps and in. It smote terribly at Bywash's heart that the woman hesitated, faltered. The man turned

and caught her arm, dragging her roughly. Mr. Bywash was trembling, but he advanced. As he came abreast of the door it was swung to. He stood there trembling, literally and positively shaking in every articulation of his body; far worse, quivering in his soul.

He had had a glimpse before the door swung; a long, narrow passage, on the left a room belonging to the window against the entrance by which he stood, at the end a flight of stairs. He could hear things. He heard heavy steps up the passage and the stairs creak. He could see things. A darkening behind the curtain of the window told him that one had entered the room. The man had gone upstairs; the woman was in the room. He looked at the door. His heart thudded with a sound that he could hear. The door had not latched. It was open! Even as he looked it began to move in a widening aperture.

He did a most appalling thing.

He crept within the door and stood in the passage. He was shaking with fear. Overhead were violent movements. In the room beside him was sobbing. He had only one coherent thought, "I'm mad. I shall be killed!" He went into the room. She was collapsed upon a couch, her arms over its back, her head bowed on her arms, sobbing. He stood there. He was shaking with terror.

She looked up. She sprung to her feet. "Oh, what is it? Who are you? What do you want?"

He was so shaking, he was so strained with listening for approach from above, his condition was altogether so frightful that he could not speak, not for a full minute, while she stared upon him in amazement. Then he stammered, "Can I help you?"

"Who are you? Who are you?"

"I was in the train with you."

"But what dó you *want?* What are you doing here? I don't understand. What is it you *want?*"

"I was in the train. I saw what was going on with you. I"—

Her eyes were round and staring in utter incomprehension. She struck her hands together, bewildered, agitated. "But what do you *want?*"

The moments were flying. He seemed to have been hours in this frightful and perilous position. At any instant might come descent upon the stairs. He was shaking. He heard his teeth knock together. He said, "I want to help you."

She understood. Her eyes that had been wide enlarged yet more. He knew perfectly well her thought, the utterly absurd and futile spectacle that he presented! If only he had been like Tom! If only he were like Harry! He knew perfectly well her thought; and she spoke and gave him her thought in its stark and dreadful bitterness. She said, "You—*you*—you must be mad—you *must* be."

It was awful to hear. His face twitched. He said with a catch in his voice, "I know. I know. But I want to. I want to. I saw you. I couldn't bear it. I felt for you. I want to. I want to."

And wider yet her eyes.

Then she made a quick step to him and put her hands on his wrists and pressed him away. "Go! Go! Go at once. While you can. You are mad—mad to be here."

She was terrified for him, and her terror joined and frightfully augmented his own. But she was touching him. Her hands were on his hands, her face close to his, the faint, stirring perfume of her flesh all about him; and touch and face and perfume thrilling him as he had never imagined one could be thrilled. He stood his ground. For one tiny instant, as a man in flush of wine, he forgot his fears and was almost brave. He stood his ground. "I want to help you. I want to."

She stood away and wrung her hands. "Oh, what can you do? What can you do? *You?* Go! Go! He'll kill you. He'll kill you."

And terror struck across her face. "Listen!"

The change in her countenance, and that hissed, dreadful word, sheerly terrified him. Frozen, he listened. Sounds on the stairs!

"Go! For God's sake, go!"

He turned and fled.

His thoughts went—Still, he had done it. Craven in that

headlong scrambling flight of his to the lowest crypt and abyss of pusillanimity—still, he had done it. He had gone in. He had spoken to her. He had said he had come to help her. He had gone in. Surely that was brave? Surely it was? Yes, it was. He had done that much, that terrific and appalling much (he shuddered even at recalling how terrific and appalling it had been). He had done that much. He was not utterly, not utterly, abandoned. By that shocking and unspeakable flight there was confirmed to him all those lamentable exposures of himself which had begun to be revealed in the railway carriage. He was a wretched thing, and no man. He knew it now. In all his years of life till now he had neither known what he was nor would have cared had he known. Now he knew; and he cared—he cared—how he cared!

Still, he had done it . . . still, he had done it . . . he clung on to that.

When his headlong panic from the house and from the street had removed him from the vicinity of danger, his thought had been of his immediate situation and of his next steps. He went to the station, and at the parcels office was able to claim his abandoned bag. He carried it to the street of his adventure, and from the corner timidly surveyed the road. In the fanlight of quite a number of the houses the notice of "Apartments" was to be seen. There was the place, just by that lamp standard. He walked down towards it on the opposite side. He dared not go immediately opposite. He might be seen. "Apartments" was exhibited in the house three doors above that point. He inquired for a room, stipulating it must overlook the street, and obtained it.

He seated himself in the window, and watched.

Early on the following morning, still watching, he saw the man come out. The man could not possibly see him, but he caught his breath and shrunk away deeper behind the curtain. How huge he looked! How brutal! Those frightful hands of his swinging by his sides! Bywash did not recover free breathing until the awful man was around the corner and out of sight.

About mid-day the woman appeared. She carried a

shopping bag. He took up his hat in a trembling hand and went downstairs and followed.

She made purchases in two or three shops. He kept away on the further side, his eyes adoring. Now she passed away from the shopping street. Her direction became the direction of the park. If only she were to go there! She was! She was! She entered, and he followed.

She went to a secluded seat, and took it; and Bywash went up to her.

Now, now began the amazing weeks! Now life, as a walled city opening its gates to one all night without, raised its portals, and Mr. Bywash walked in.

## V

For a long period into that first meeting her part was solely of utter incomprehension. She simply could not understand Mr. Bywash, and he was so manifestly the futile creature he looked that she made no pretense of not understanding him. She might have been afraid of his approaches; but no living creature could possibly be afraid of Mr. Bywash. She might have been indignant at his presumption; but his extraordinary manner forbade any such indignation. She might have felt towards him any of the variously outraged feelings that a young woman would have towards a strange man who pursued her; but Mr. Bywash, though a stranger, was not a man. That was just it. He was so utterly and fatuously out of keeping with the part he seemed to be playing. And what *was* the part he was playing? She simply could not comprehend. She absolutely could not understand. Over and over again she said to him, he standing there before her—such an object, and agonizingly aware of what an object he was—over and over again she said, "But I don't *understand*. I simply can't. What is it you *want? Why* are you speaking to me? I can't understand."

And he couldn't explain. He could only stammer perfectly meaningless things. He wanted to say all sorts of things, and couldn't say them. He was suffering all sorts

of emotions, manifested by a lump in his throat, by mistiness before his eyes, and he could not possibly express them. And she kept on with that, "But what is it you *want? Why* are you speaking to me?"—telling him as plainly as if she were saying it what a ludicrous and utterly negligible fool he looked.

Weak tears came into his weak eyes. She saw them. She said quickly: "I *am* so sorry; I really am; but really I simply cannot understand. I can't. Believe me, how sorry I am."

He had to wipe his eyes. This kind note in her voice. . . . It worsened his plight.

He said, "The truth is just that I want to talk to you. I've never spoken to a woman in my life before. I saw you in that carriage yesterday, and I saw how wretched you were, and I felt, I simply can't tell you how I felt for you. I've never felt sorry for anyone, or cared in the least what happened to anyone, in all my life before. I felt for you—I can't tell you. I can't explain it even to myself—how it happened so suddenly, how I felt it so frightfully. I can't tell you. I wanted to interfere, to say something, somehow to help you. I didn't dare. You can see what I am. You saw yesterday when I bolted out of your house what I am. It's no good trying to hide it. You can see for yourself. Anyone can. I wanted to interfere. I didn't dare. I followed you. I had to. I've told you why. It was just what came over me so frightfully when I looked up at you in the carriage. So I had to follow. And then I went in. I did do that. Of course I bolted. I bolted directly I heard him coming. It's no good trying to hide what I am. But that I did go in—that shows you, I do hope it shows you, how frightfully I felt for you, how frightfully I do feel for you."

He ended, "That's all. It's just what I've tried to tell you. It's just that I've never spoken to a woman in my life—oh, do please let me talk to you. It's incredible that I can be of any help to you. But you never know. Perhaps I can. Oh, if only I could. . . ."

She said, "Oh, do sit down. It's extraordinary, this. Even now I can't quite— But indeed I do thank you very

much for wanting to help me. I'm glad to talk to you. If you were anyone else I shouldn't dare. But you—it doesn't seem to matter with you. You don't mind my saying that, do you? It really doesn't seem to matter. And I *am* glad to talk to you. There's no one I'm ever allowed to talk to. When you saw me in the carriage—you want to know about that, don't you?—when you saw me, I'd been running away. It was the second time I'd tried. He came after me and caught me. He was bringing me back."

Mr. Bywash said, "He looked as though he was going to— Does he b—" He could hardly frame the dreadful word. "Does he beat you?"

She pushed back to the elbow the sleeve of one arm. He saw bruisings, scars. He writhed in his seat. If only he had been like Tom! If only he were Harry! If only he were any other than this that he was!

They began, from then, to meet every day. They began to spend, in the Park, all of every day together. She told him her husband was a street bookmaker. His beat was down in the docks quarter. He was out all day from immediately after breakfast until late at night or early in the morning. She never knew at what hour he would come in or in what drunken state he would arrive. Supper always had to be ready for him whatever the hour was, always just ready to the turn, or—she indicated those bruised arms. His business and his companionship was with the roughest men. He often brought dreadful men to the house at night; but everyone was afraid of him; he always carried a revolver. (That made Mr. Bywash shudder. It was a thing he always remembered.)

She told him all her life story. It was impossible to imagine anyone finding attraction in Mr. Bywash's company, but misery makes strange companions, and she was abject in misery and loneliness and fear. Her attitude towards Mr. Bywash was that she welcomed his company as the prisoner in his cell comes to welcome and make friends of the timid mouse.

She told him all about herself. Her father had been a Master in the Merchant Service.

"Why, my father was in the Navy," cried Mr. Bywash. It seemed to make a bond between them. "In the Royal Navy. He was a captain."

It was the first time he had ever been proud of his father's position. The first time he had ever thought tuppence about it. How wonderful to be talking about things like this with someone!

Her father was drowned at sea. She and her mother were left penniless, here in Stormouth. They started to take in lodgers—first a good class, and then, not getting them, a poor class; and then, still struggling, and her mother ailing, any class that prayers would bring. So this man came, Mr. Wilks, of whom always she had been terrified, with whom ultimately she was forced into marriage. Her mother was failing, her mother needed comforts; at last, if her mother's life was to be saved, she needed better conditions altogether, and there was scarcely enough to keep the roof over their heads. Then the man offered her marriage, promises for her mother's well-being, everything that they most desperately needed. She was terrified. This offer followed the offer of sale of herself on baser terms but for the same prize—her mother's life. She had rejected that with such spirit as she dared show to their sole means of support. In its turn she rejected this. She could not, could not bring herself to it; and her mother worsened, and, knowing only cunning kindness from the man, began to implore her consent. But she could not. She simply could not.

Pitiably she presented to Mr. Bywash her life at that period, attending on her mother, attending on the man. Besought by her mother, and watching her dying before her eyes; baited by the man and terrified of him, revolted by him.

O pitiable! Mr. Bywash had never had the remotest idea that such things went on in life. Without interests and without solicitudes in his own existence, he had never even troubled to imagine how other people existed. That this kind of thing should be! That she should suffer it!

But there was much worse. The man came to her one day. "Still can't make up your mind, my girlie?"

"I can't, Mr. Wilks. I really and truly can't—just yet."

"Thought you couldn't. D'you know what? I want cher so much that I've set about making up your pretty mind for you."

"Oh, what do you mean?"

She knew it was something terrible. It was. He had bought the house they lived in! They had it on a weekly tenancy. He would give her a fortnight to make up her mind. Within a fortnight she either would marry him and have all she wanted for her mother, or she and her mother would pack up and get out—out into the street.

She married him.

Her mother, betrayed in every promise, died within the year. That was five years ago. That was all. She twice, as she had said, had tried to run away. He kept her without money. She had stolen from him that with which she had made the attempt whose lamentable termination Mr. Bywash had seen. She never would have the chance again. Where could she go, how could she live, if ever she did again have the chance? And one day he would kill her. She knew he would. Escape—she must escape. Where? How?

She wrung her hands, piteously regarding Mr. Bywash. That was all.

Escape. Where? How? Terrible and enormous enterprises began to shake in Mr. Bywash's mind.

## VI

But oh the new and amazing life amid which these terrible and enormous enterprises began to form—the revelations, the ecstasies, out of which, like high sparks springing out of flame, they sprung!

All he had never been, all he had never known, stirred, moved, breathed, warmed, awoke, and came to life within him. As wine through exhausted senses, as rain among the baked and arid watercourses of the plains, as dew by

night upon the desert, as springtide in hibernating homes of creature and of insect, as all of these, so within Mr. Bywash saps that had never flowed, pulses that had never beat, ardours that had never kindled, emotions whose suns had never dawned, perceptions whose eyes had never opened.

He loved! The spirit breathed upon the waters of his being, and that which had been void and purposeless took form and purpose. He loved! The world, which had contained for him nobody and nothing, contained a glorious and a wondrous other, and through her teemed, hymned, and radiated with glories and with wonders. He had never opened his heart to himself, much less to another. He opened it to her, and the flood of its outpouring was beyond words delicious to him. He told her all his life as she had told him hers. He told her of his father and his mother, of Harry and of Tom. O, wonderful to have someone to tell such things to! He never had had any pride or affection in his people. Enormous pride and enormous affection came in the telling. And when he was absent from her other incredibly delectable emotions—dreams, visions, amazing revelations of unsuspected worlds. He never had read anything in his life except the newspaper, desultorily. He began to be voracious of reading novels, stories, cheap, trashy stuff. His only guide to them was their hectic covers and their burning titles. Love was the only thing he sought in them. He skipped all else that they contained. How the hero loved and how the heroine loved; how their love came to them; how they felt their love and how they declared their love. That was all he wanted. Avid to know, avid to compare their transports with his transports, to express his surgings in terms of their surgings; frenzied to be schooled in love, with hungry eyes and hungry hands he tore love from these cheap and crudely written prints as a starving animal tears meat from a bone. He would rip out pages and carry them with him, transcribe passages, and get them by heart.

One day she told him her name was Enid.

Enid!

There were three outstanding things that happened in this matter of reading. They came from sources incom-

parably above the stuff whereon he feasted, and in the case of two, but that they came upon him detached and removed from their surrounding confusions, would have been altogether beyond his comprehension.

One was the lines printed beneath a water-colour painting of a bowl of violets hanging in a print-seller's window:

> ". . . violets dim,
> But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
> Or Cytherea's breath . . ."

It smote him like a catch at his throat. Once when she was talking to him she had closed her eyes, and he had trembled to see the exquisite softness and smoothness and delicacy of her lids. White; and yet not white for having the faintest, softest tinge of blue. He had gazed as a pilgrim might gaze upon a shrine. He had never imagined such a hue could be. Lo, here was the very expression of it; the inexpressible expressed exactly; the vision so ethereal that he never could precisely recall it, here precisely recalled. "Violets dim . . ." Yes! Yes! And sweeter—"Sweeter than . . . Cytherea's breath." That meant if you stooped to touch with your lips a bed of violets. Yes! Yes! Exactly that if one might stoop to kiss those lids of hers! Wonderful! Wonderful! That was what he wanted—words to express these astounding things, these exquisite and thrice entrancing things.

The second occasion touched a profounder depth and led directly to the third. The second occasion was before the second-hand bookseller's from whose tray of cheap moderns and periodicals he distilled his love potions. Within the window were displayed volumes of the poets; opened, their leaves bound back with bands. Searching amid his sensational covers, his eye glanced up to the books and idly took a verse—

> "I held it truth with him who sings
> To one clear harp in divers tones,"

Meaningless! But his eye, on the point of returning to his quest, was held and completed the stanza—

"That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

Ah! He caught at his breath with the sound as it were of a sob.

On stepping-stones—may rise on stepping-stones . . . of their dead selves . . . to higher things. . . . *Might* they? *Could* they? Might he? Could he? Could he get himself like Tom—like Harry? Could he rise to their courage, to their bold, manly qualities? Was it possible indeed that on stepping-stones of those shocking infirmities of spirit of which he now was so poignantly aware he could rise to—to courage? Not shrink? Not tremble? Not shudder every time there came across his mind the image of that violent and frightful man? Not know that in a crisis, that if a crisis ever came between that man and she and he, not know that in such a crisis inevitably he would desert her? Was it possible?

He turned from the book-shop, new matter from that which had taken him there in his mind, and the wind toppled the upmost of a pile of battered second-hand rag-bag stuff. He stooped to replace it, and his thumb was upon the concluding words of the volume.

". . . So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

He looked at the title. *Pilgrim's Progress*. He read again, two lines higher.

". . . to the river side, into which as he went he said, 'Death where is thy sting?' And as he went down deeper he said, 'Grave where is thy victory?' So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

Courage! Courage! O matchless sublimity of courage here!

He bought the book—tuppence!—and hurried with it to his lodging.

## VII

He was back at Tidborough.

He was planning her escape.

He had for some time known a little empty cottage on the outskirts of the village of Penny Green, a few miles from Tidborough. He sold a portion of the investments left him by his father and bought the cottage; and now the rapturous delights of searching shops to furnish and adorn it—for her!

Before he left her, on the termination of his holiday, he told her of the cottage and of the escape it offered her. He pretended the cottage was already his; "on his hands," as he put it, and would be all the better for having a tenant. How was she to live? That was simple. There was an immense demand for furnished rooms in and around Penny Green; it had always been an idea of his to put into this cottage someone who could let off the two spare rooms there would be; it was really a piece of luck for him to find her for the purpose.

That was how he put it. That the demand for rooms in Penny Green was much greater than the supply was true; he knew it well in the course of his duties at the estate office. The inventions of his story—the cottage "on his hands," the service she would do him by occupying it—were for the purpose of maintaining the part on which, quite well he knew, alone rested her acceptance of his companionship; the prisoner's mouse, the strange but welcome visitant of her immolation. No more than that; and as, in their meetings, he had never dared to hint at his love, so now, in his plan for her escape, he sedulously presented no more than kindliness. To hint at more risked giving her alarm, severance of their friendship, refusal of his aid. And threatened worse than that. He knew she never had remotely imagined feelings of love for him; but he felt it surely would kill him to hear it, in actual fact, from her lips. He was as one knowingly carrying within him sentence of death in form of mortal sickness but terrified to present himself to the physician and hear his doom. Therefore his acceptance of his part, therefore his inventions, therefore his reiteration to her only of this most true portion of his case—that never in his life till now had he had anyone to talk to; that talking to her, telling her all about himself, was the most exquisite happiness he

ever had imagined, and that he begged her, in charity, to accept this means of escape so that he still might come over to her in his leisure hours and sit—and just talk.

In his daydreams he dreamt to himself that one day, one day . . .

One day. . . . He was arranging her escape. He was planning also the winning of her love, to which gratitude for her escape should be the first step. She never could love him as he was, of that he was perfectly assured. The task was to remake himself . . . on stepping-stones . . . of his dead self. . . . And that was to become a man. Not to shrink. Not to tremble. Not to be one useless mass of fears. To be a man. Like Tom. Like Harry. Like other men. Courage. Courage. The battered *Pilgrim's Progress,* more battered for his ceaseless use of it, was now his daily sustenance. As he had torn love from his periodicals, so now voraciously he sought to tear courage from the leaves of Bunyan's story. The allegorical significance was no more to him than, in search of love, had been the plots of the novels. It was solely the emotions and the expressions of love his heart had desired; it now was solely the emotions and expressions of courage for which his spirit craved. He read the book again and again and again; and every snatch of reading he terminated with the enormous elixir of that concluding line—

> "So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

That tingled him. That set his foot upon those dead-self stepping-stones and raised him up. He used to imagine himself doing some mighty and splendid thing, and all the trumpets sounding for him as he went proudly toward her, proudly, lovingly awaiting him. That was the thing! That was it! One day. . . . One day. . . .

All was ready! He was walking to the cottage for a last indulgence in the sight of all the beauty and the comforts he had prepared for her. To-morrow was the day fixed. Everything was planned, and she had written

confirming the plans. In case, after her flight, inquiries should be made at the station, she was to take the morning express train to London. That would throw her husband off the scent. From London a train which would get her to Tidborough at three o'clock. He would not meet her at the station. He was to have the ecstasy ("the pleasure" as he had temperately expressed it in writing to her) of welcoming her in the cottage, "which I think you will find"—another careful expression of the mere friendliness that was his—"which I think you will find more or less ready for you."

More or less! The quaint old cottage, beautiful in itself, had lent its interior to beauty in its decoration. Love gave him taste. There was not an article he had purchased, nor one he had placed in position, but her face had been imagined against it, directing his perceptions as the North Star directs the wanderer. A neighbouring cottager, Mrs. Jennings, had been brought in daily to assist the arranging. Stepping in with him on his arrival on this last evening, she gave the admiration that was enchantment to him to hear.

"Well, if it isn't just a picture," declared Mrs. Jennings, gazing round the parlour. "A picture. I never would have believed to see the like of it outside of a real picture, I declare to goodness I wouldn't, and that's the truth, sir."

How pleased he was! He patted the head of tiny Laura, Mrs. Jennings's little girl, and with his other hand felt in his pocket for Laura's present that was to celebrate this splendid conclusion.

"Yes, it certainly does look nice, Mrs. Jennings. And, Mrs. Jennings, you're going to let Laura be over here to-morrow to be playing here when the lady arrives?"

Mrs. Jennings certainly was. She would just pop Laura inside on her way to work after lunch, and there she'd be, all nice and pretty for the lady.

"And playing with her musical box," smiled Hector, producing the present from his pocket.

How tiny Laura jumped and clapped her hands for joy! She had been promised anything she liked from the toyshops at Tidborough, and a musical box, like one

of her friends had, had been what Hector was asked to buy. Mr. Bywash, in so far as he had ever noticed them at all, had always detested children. The new emotions that now were his had opened in the most astonishing way to tiny Laura. He loved to see her playing about the floor. Enid would want a companion. Enid would love to have tiny Laura constantly with her. He used to sit and imagine Enid with the child on her knees, telling her stories; Enid making tea, with the child clutching at her skirts. It made him feel—indescribable; it made his heart swell.

Mrs. Jennings ran off to her cottage. He sat himself down in the chair specially chosen for Enid's comfort. Tiny Laura at his feet fumbled the musical box out of its wrappings.

To-morrow! This time to-morrow Enid would be here. She would have examined the beauties of the cottage. She would be making tea for him. She would be enchanted. She would be beyond expression happy. In her heart would be the beginnings of her gratitude. The beginnings . . . the beginnings . . .

"Now you're right, Laura. Turn the handle. Let's hear the pretty tunes."

He only knew of the toy that the girl in the shop had called it a "three tune" box. He smiled to see tiny Laura's tongue come out and move from side to side under the strain of her melody-making. The tinkling tune was vaguely familiar. Some popular national air. He had probably heard it on street organs, perhaps in the Park at Stormouth. He wondered if Enid could play the piano, and how much one would cost. Imagine sitting here of an evening while she played!

The musical box clicked. The music stopped.

"Go on, Laura. Wind on. Another one coming."

Yes, a piano. A piano would be fine if he could afford it. It could stand by the window there. How beautiful she would look seated at the keys. How she would love this room. To-morrow at this hour she would be there. How grateful she would be to him. How wonderful, indeed, that he had done all this. Planned her escape, purchased

this home, furnished it. It all had wanted some doing! It had! It was not a thing that everyone could have carried out so successfully. How he had developed in these last few weeks! He was twice, he was a dozen times the man he used to be. Stepping-stones . . . of those dead selves. He was climbing up. . . . He was. . . . He was certain of it. . . .

"Go on, Laura. Wind away. Still another. Here, let me do this one." He stooped forward and took the box. Yes, climbing up. . . . Would never look back now. . . . He wound the handle—

> "Some talk of Alexander and some of Hercules,
> Of HECTOR and—"

"Take it, Laura. Take it away. You'd better go home now. You're to go home now. Don't you hear? No; don't play it. You're not to wind it. Time to go now. Don't you *hear?*"

Laura was frightened.

. . . . . .

The day was Thursday; early-closing day at Tidborough, and chosen for that reason. He left the office at one o'clock. He had bought a "best suit" since this new thing had come into his life, and he went first to his lodgings to spruce himself up in it before going on to the cottage to await her. His spirits were high. The night had been bad. He had scarcely slept. That tune, that infernal, hateful tune, coming like that, upset him. Through the night it had washed at the foundations of his new beliefs in himself as rising waters washing about timbers built in sand. Had he changed? Had he improved? If there came to his courage a test . . . Was it an omen, that accursed tune, coming like that, in that place, at that hour, made by his own hands?

A feverish and tortured night.

But with the morning his oppression had gone. After all, at the worse, if indeed he was no more than the man he had been, even then, what test of his courage could there possibly be? When she was safely arrived here

she would be as secure here, and he would be as secure here, as if they were on another continent. It became easy as the morning advanced, to build up from this certitude of safety assurance of courage if there were danger.

It always is. It is the commonest form of valour.

He was working briskly upon it as he let himself into his lodgings and passed up the stairs to his room. Everything was safe. Everything was easy. Everything was wonderful and glorious. He was miles removed from the timid thing he had been. He could wish there might be some test of his manhood that Enid could see. If the horse that would be drawing her cab were to run away and he rush out from the cottage and stop it! If a bull were to frighten her in the lane outside and he most audaciously attack the brute and rescue her! Something like that!

But it was not anything like that. It was something quite different.

As he opened the door of his room and stepped within, the huge and malevolent form of her husband rose to greet him.

"Shut that door," said Mr. Wilks.

He turned and shut it.

One of those enormous fists of Mr. Wilks presented a revolver straight in his face. The other fist shot out and into his chest like a battering ram, staggering him backwards. But the fist clutched him, gathering up the better part of his waistcoat and of his shirt in its enormous paw, and shook him ferociously so that his teeth knocked together. "Where's my wife?"

His tongue, in his sheer terror, clove to the roof of his mouth. He could not speak.

"Where is she? Out with it!"

"Not here."

Again that frightful shaking, jerking his head to and fro. "Not here! I can see that with me own blasted eyes, can't I? Is she in this house?"

"No."

"Coming here?"

"No."

He was shaken to and fro for a full half minute. "Listen

to me. I know you've got her away." He called her by a gross epithet. "The——left half your letters behind. I know you've got her." Mr. Wilks returned the revolver to his pocket and put up the fist that had held it, clenched, terrific. "Am I going to start this on your face or are you going to tell me? Quick with it!"

"I'll tell you."

"Quick with it."

He told.

Mr. Wilks flung him away with a violent motion. He spun along the wall, crashed into the washing-stand and fell over it to the floor. The ewer capsized and shattered. The water drenched him.

"Get up!" commanded Mr. Wilks. "You louse! Run away with a man's wife! *You!* Get up and show the way, and me lady'll see what I'm going to do with you, and you'll see what I'm going to do with me lady. Up with you!"

## VIII

They were in the cottage, waiting for her. Mr. Wilks lolled in an armchair, a cigar in his mouth, his legs on the table. Hector Bywash sat opposite him, the table between them, his head bowed in his hands. In the little room adjoining was tiny Laura. Mr. Wilks, engaged on arrival in ferocious mockery of the decorations of the pretty parlour, had not appeared to notice the child. Hector had smuggled her out of view and shut the door upon her.

While they waited was heard the steady ticking of the clock upon the wall—bringing her closer—the heavy breathing of Mr. Wilks, inclined to doze, the occasional sharp intake of Hector's breath, in vision watching her approach to his betrayal of her, sometimes through the door the faint tinkle of the musical box.

Hector Bywash, head buried in his hands, was silently rocking his shoulders up and down in agony of this culmination to which he had brought his life, his new-found dreams, his new-raised hopes in himself.

All his life's uselessness and turpitude had culminated in this unspeakable betrayal of the woman he worshipped. "Where's my wife?" and, vilest thing that he was, he had betrayed her with the very next breath that he drew. His mind ran up and down his life that had brought him to this final perfidy, and he groaned aloud.

"Shut that," commanded Mr. Wilks drowsily, and he was silent.

His mind, as one that runs distractedly to and fro, wringing his hands before his house in flames, ran up and down his every scene with her, his every thought of her; and from every scene and every thought came back to this his betrayal of her, this the trap he had prepared for her. His mind stood among the ecstasies of love he had torn from his periodicals and books; it cried with a most terrible bitterness before the heights of courage which fondly he believed he had imitated from the pages of his *Pilgrim's Progress*. And always back to his betrayal of her.

And suddenly there penetrated the agony of his mind this most frightful thought, *"There's still time to save her!"*

Some men successfully flee judgment all their lives; wriggle from truth, elude truth, stifle truth, somehow get away and escape truth. Mr. Bywash had thus fled and thus escaped for all the decades of his maturity. But now he was run to earth. He was caught. Truth had him.

And immediately there came to him, as there comes to men thus captured, trial within his own bosom of the kind that is said to await all men in the last senate of eternity. As then before God, so here within their own hearts, the captives of truth protest their case before the verities seated in judgment about them.

Mr. Bywash, laid by the heels after a very long run of freedom, stood now in such a court; a very tiny figure, prisoner at the bar of truth, a very pitiable object for the assemblage of such a tremendous tribunal, and looked from the records of his life hung upon the walls to the faces of the verities sitting as arbiters upon his case, and wrung his hands, and protested.

THE DEFENDANT: My Lords, my Lords, it's all very

well. My Lords, you see—My Lords you must surely see, it was like this, if only I had had a minute's preparation! If only, as I went up those stairs, I had known he was waiting in my room! If only I had even heard him when I was just the other side of the door. If only I had had the smallest, faintest warning I would have had time to think, I would have had time to steel myself, and I wouldn't have done it. I wouldn't. Indeed and indeed, my Lords, I would not have done it.

The Arbiters: Attend. You have got time now. Time to think, time to steel yourself, time to prevent it. You have betrayed her, but she hasn't yet come to your betrayal. She's on the road. But there's—look at the clock—twenty minutes before she can get here. Twenty minutes between you and what you will be forever after. Twenty minutes not to do it, and you haven't done it yet. Twenty minutes to save her.

The Defendant with shaking limbs crept out of the court.

Mr. Bywash very cautiously raised his bowed head to the level of the table. The huge soles of Mr. Wilks's boots confronted him. He raised his glance above them. Mr. Wilks's eyes were half closed; no glow was to be seen upon the cigar that depended from his mouth.

Mr. Bywash's mind fixed on the revolver that had been pointed at him. He knew which pocket it was in. If he could get that. . . . The light table was so small that its further end was well beneath Mr. Wilks's thighs, and Mr. Wilks's chair was slightly tilted on its back legs. If he gave one great heave from beneath the table . . . and then a dash and a grab for the revolver while the man was sprawling . . . if he did that . . . if he could . . . if he dared. . . .

Ten minutes passed. He went back into the court, and the court re-assembled to hear him.

The Defendant: My Lords, my Lords, it's like this. You see, if I *did* attack him, what could I possibly *do?* I'm ready to try. I'm perfectly ready to do it. I swear I am. But what earthly good could I do? Anyone looking at me and looking at him would say it would be grotesque

and useless folly. In two minutes I should be killed. My Lords, my Lords, isn't that the fact? Isn't that *true?* What earthly good? In two minutes I should be killed.

THE ARBITERS: Be killed, then.

The Defendant covered his face with his hands and bowed, as beneath an insupportable weight, to the ground.

THE ARBITERS (*unmoved*): Be killed, then.

From the Defendant, prone upon the ground, no word.

THE ARBITERS: Be killed, then. That will save her.

THE DEFENDANT (*screaming*): How? How? How can it save her?

THE ARBITERS: Attend. You have never faced truth in your life. You are facing it now. You have always argued yourself out of every danger. You now cannot argue yourself out. Be killed. It will save her. If you are killed he will have murdered you. He will flee for his life. He will never dare to come near her again. She will be free of him forever. You have five minutes, Bywash.

The court withdrew, and left Mr. Bywash.

## IX

He thought, "on stepping stones . . . of their dead selves . . . One quick moment and it will all be over. At once. If I don't do it at once . . ."

He put his hands beneath the table. He sprang upright and hurled the table up and back. He flung himself upon the sprawling, cursing body, and dived, and thrust in his hand and got it—the revolver. He was clutched and overthrown. They were somehow upon their feet. The revolver was in his right hand. The left hand of Mr. Wilks was upon it. The other hand was at his throat, throttling him.

This is what happened.

The revolver was muzzle upwards in their united grasp between them. They held it elbow to elbow, forearm to forearm, wrist to wrist, knuckle to knuckle. It was poised between them, and, like the dial of a pressure-gauge, moved now to this side, now to that, now tensely quivered at the apex of its movement. Sometimes it went

a little nearer Mr. Wilks's chin, sometimes a little nearer the chin of Mr. Bywash, sometimes trembled almost at rest midway between them.

Mr. Bywash's face was black with the pressure of Mr. Wilks's fingers upon his throat. But while the eyes of Mr. Wilks bulged with fear and with savagery as he strove for possession of the weapon, the eyes of Mr. Bywash shone with an intense and an extraordinary light. The deep waters of death were about him, and he knew himself descending into death; but he might have said, "Death, where is thy sting?" And he felt his strength going, and knew the end was upon him; but he might have said, "Grave, where is thy victory?"

An enormous exaltation of mind was his. There was a great roaring in his ears, but it was to him as the clamour of many voices acclaiming him. He relaxed his arm, and the pistol came with a thud to his neck and was discharged.

He collapsed at the knees in the arms of Mr. Wilks. He collapsed at the waist and fell away in the arms of Mr. Wilks, his head hanging.

Mr. Wilks stared with starting eyes upon his face. Mr. Wilks said terribly, "My God! My God!"

He dropped the body of Hector Bywash, and stood away and stared in terror. He turned and rushed from the house. A cab was drawing up at the door. The driver shouted. Mr. Wilks put up his arms to hide his face, and turned in the other direction and fled down the road.

A small sigh passed from the lips of Mr. Bywash, and there tinkled from the adjoining room:

"Some talk of Alexander, and some of Hercules,
Of HECTOR and Lysander, and such great names as these."

So, to that threnody, he passed over; and it was, perhaps, as he had wished, that all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

# COMFORT[1]

By F. TENNYSON JESSE

(From *The London Magazine*)

RONALD LIGHTFOOT was on his way home. So were a couple of dozen other men who had come back from the city by the early train. Each man bore an umbrella, most of them carried a dispatch case and some were taking home fish, bought in Leadenhall Market, in a frail. Some of the younger men were taking home a little fruit or even a bunch of flowers. Ronnie alone was empty handed. Yet he looked like the others, he knew that. He felt wearily aware that if he had been suddenly caught up and dropped down in Central Africa he would still be unmistakably something-in-the-City on his way home to the suburbs. Whatever fantastic freak he might indulge in between leaving his office and arriving at the door of No. 57 Bracknell Road he would still retain that inalienable look which time and custom had stamped on him, for Ronnie's adventures all took place in his mind. Every day between Mincing Lane and Turnham Green he lived in that country of the fourth dimension which has its inspiration in the half-conscious wish that life were entirely otherwise. This was the only country, thought Ronald, where such as I can adventure. He looked at himself in the strip of mirror opposite him and beneath the enamelled letters advertising a patent baby food he saw his own face peering as though from behind the bars of a cage and not for the first time he thought how ridiculous his daring name, a name like that of a boy hero

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in a detective story, was, when taken together with his slight stoop, his pale, thin face that was so far from being the square-jawed, determined visage of any hero whatsoever. In the long ago days when he had been newly married, Enid told him she admired his appearance because it was so refined. Of course it was a good thing to be refined, and all that, he did not want a red roll of neck coming over his collar at the back like old Dickman's, but he wished that he had the time and the money and energy to go in for games so that his shoulders could have broadened and his hands looked less betrayingly thin and white.

The train stopped at Turnham Green and Ronald clattered down the long flights of wooden steps in company with all the other dark-coated males, nodding slightly to one or two whom he knew. Once out in the road the compact little black crowd separated and trotted off in different directions. Ronald saw himself as making one of this crowd and, like the others, making blindly for his burrow, merely because it was his burrow, after the day's hunting, going undeviatingly towards a certain number in a certain street as though drawn there by an unseen wire, like goblins in a pantomime. Or like ants, that was it, as silly and self-important and tied down by routine as ants were. He remembered how, when he was a boy, he had read in some travel book about a stream of umbrella ants, each carrying its little leaf above its head and all running along busily towards their home. The rain was over and umbrellas were furled, yet every man carried, as it were, above his head his particular illusion which he had evolved for himself for his own protection, which enabled him, safe under its broad leaf, to run backwards and forwards on the same trail day after day and year after year without being distracted by any storm or sign that might force him to ask himself what, after all, he was doing there. If you stirred the stream of umbrella ants up with a stick they fell into dire confusion, dropped their umbrellas, ran hither and thither, fought each other blindly and furiously. Was that not what happened when there was a war? Did not whoever it is that has the big long stick grow tired of seeing endless little processions running backwards and forwards on the same

roads, and, leaning down from the arch of space stir them together as a wanton child might stir the ants? Wars, earthquakes, pestilences, great fires, just stirrings of the stick to make the umbrellas drop, lest people should die of the smug safety of their illusions. . . . That was why he was unhappy, because he had no illusion. He could not think of himself as a good citizen, a rate-payer, a husband and a house-owner. He could not see himself as those other men did; as a worthy being engaged on an excellent way of life, he saw quite plainly a thin, pale, rather stooping man looking young for his years, but conscious that they were thirty-seven in number and that the life which had caught him had held him for so long that now it would never let him go. What could make a real difference to him? Suppose a stir of the stick were given to these ants in Bedford Park and the busy little creatures were all deflected towards strange, unknown, hitherto unguessed-at houses and, by some miracle, were accepted by their inmates. Would just a different house and a different woman in it give a sensation of a new world opening or would it merely be the same world very slightly readjusted? Could relationship with any one other human being affect the fabric of daily life or was it necessary that the very stuff should be changed? Lighted windows at night! How often when he had gone out the last thing for his solitary walk, that walk which Enid always viewed with such dislike as being rather eccentric on his part, how often had he felt the magic of those lambent squares that made the houses, so solid by day, seem mere shells, enclosing Heaven only knew what possibilities, at night. Directly you knew the inside of a room the magic was gone. That was a funny thing. If you could only catch a glimpse of a corner of a table, the globe of a lamp, the gleam of glass from a side-board, the shadow of a head and shoulders upon a wall, the flicker of firelight behind thin curtains, so long as you could only see these, every fantastic and romantic and wonderful possibility, every queer twist that makes the odd amongst humans so dramatic, could be imagined on the other side of that magic casement. But once you knew, you might like the people who lived there, you might even think them

interesting, beautiful, but the something that one wanted, that one caught a glimpse of now and again in a passing face, in the song of a bird, in some half-caught phrase, that something was gone forever. And yet surely it could not be that knowledge was destructive . . . or the whole of life would merely be a gigantic joke on the part of the Creator, and a joke in the worst possible taste. It was not knowledge, or so he tried to assure himself, it was certainty that killed, and all the while his feet were carrying him with their terrible fidelity towards No. 57 and the streets and houses, seldom consciously noticed by him but passed so many hundred times that he would have been aware at once had anything been different in them, were pressing on his mind with their usual effect of tiresome reiteration. Yet this evening there was something, some quality of beauty, even about these self-consciously artistic gables that stirred him. He lifted his eyes and saw that it was the sky and not the earth which was transfigured and which lent its glow even to these familiar ways. A great bird filled the sky, a dying bird flung on the golden field, a bird whose plumes shaded from thunderous purple through flame to a golden edge of down. One wing spread over all the arch of the sky above him, trailing the tips of its sanguine feathers over the waste land beyond the new and crudest of the houses. Every grass blade in the little gardens, every smug hedge of clipped privet was steeped in the glow shed from the amazing plumage, and the winged sky seemed to brood over the clustering houses as though they had huddled there in fear. People came to their house doors to watch the flaming beauty, even errand boys stopped for a moment at the end of the road to give the miracle the guerdon of a glance and Ronald stood, letting the light flow into him like wine until the almost imperceptible movement of the soft cloud masses had altered that first amazing portent of wings to a more diffuse pattern, then, still a little dazed, he went home.

He found himself fitting his key into his own immaculate front door and walking into his rigidly tidy hall. Mrs. Lightfoot, who was sitting in the drawing-room, called out to him when she heard him in the hall to be careful

about his shoes as it was wet outside. To make things safer, she got up and rang the bell, so that the maid could take his shoes away from him there, for it had been the "day for the hall and staircase," which cryptic phrase meant that on Thursdays the hall and staircase came in for that extra vigorous cleaning which on one day in each week descended like a cyclone on each part of the house in turn.

"The day for the drawing-room" meant that Enid Lightfoot had to sit in the dining-room till after lunch, so she was wont to occupy that day by giving the silver an extra polish. Of course, there was the "day for the silver" as well, but only once a fortnight, so that a little extra attention did it no harm.

On the "day for the dining-room" she had lunch on a tray in the drawing-room and generally looked over the linen. On the "day for the best bedroom" she did her own and Ronald's mending, as that was Monday, when the washing, which had arrived home on Saturday evening and been sorted on Sunday, was ready for ironing and patching. The spare bedroom, which was hardly ever used, as Enid felt that visitors upset the working of the house so, only had a day twice a month, like hostesses who are at home the second and fourth Tuesdays. The kitchen was always "done" on Saturdays, and so Ronald, who was home to lunch on that day, was given a cold lunch; but then kitchens are always "done" on Saturdays. And the hall and staircase were "done" on Thursdays, and Ronald knew by heart the blend of smell with which he would be greeted when he opened the door on Thursday evening—a sort of mixture of furniture polish and yellow soap.

Ronald had once had a curious phantasy that spun itself in his mind on his walk from the station. He had thought that if by some strange Wellsian happening the clocks of all the world had stopped, and the calendars vanished, and people had lost their sense of which day was which, he could have said: "Just let me go along to my house in Bracknell Road and I will go round smelling each room, and I shall be able to tell you which day of the week it is without fail."

But of course he knew how lucky he was to have such a splendid wife as Enid. She often told him—and, indeed,

he could see for himself—how much better his house was run than that of any of his friends. Perhaps he sometimes envied the casual way the men he knew asked people home to dinner, whereas he could not even accept such an invitation if he was unable to let her know about it, for she would worry so about him. She was quite right, of course. After all, a woman ran her house as a man ran his business, and nothing was more annoying than unpunctuality or uncertainty or carelessness.

He put his feet into the slippers the maid had produced for him from the cupboard under the stairs, and went into the drawing-room.

Enid was lying on her long chair—she was very delicate, which made it all the finer of her to work so strenuously over the superintending of her house—neatly dressed in a chiffon evening blouse, and black accordian-pleated nun's-veiling skirt. Her fair, faded hair was done in the style of fifteen years earlier—puffed out in a pompadour, showing her neat, pale ears.

The phantasies which Ronald had woven to himself on his way home vanished like smoke with his entry into the drawing-room, and this home-coming which, for some purely irrational reason had seemed to him to hold some strange new quality, some hitherto untouched possibility, became like all other home-comings.

They chatted for a little, desultorily, about the events of the day—how the butcher had answered Enid back, how she had told the butcher that that sort of thing might be all very well for Bolsheviks, but would not do for Bedford Park, and how the butcher had said he hadn't meant it.

Ronald, dutifully doing his bit, recounted what the office-boy had said to the chief, and how bloodshed had only been averted by the timely arrival of the 3.30 *Evening News* bearing the glad tidings that the chief had won at a hundred to eight. The office boy having put his money on an "also ran," it had been felt that the right and proper balance of things was once more restored in the firm.

As Ronald talked there came over him that curious feeling that everyone knows, and that scientists attempt to explain by saying that the two lobes of the brain are not

working quite in unison. He felt that he had been through all this before, had heard the same things, said the same things; and he would have added, thought and felt the same things, had he not been suddenly only too conscious of the fact that he was not thinking or feeling anything at all. He talked and he talked, and that was all there was to it, he told himself bitterly.

Ronald suddenly came to that breaking point which lies in wait for every man. He knew with a clarity which he had never experienced before that he could not sit opposite Enid at dinner that night, that if he did he would seize the mutton—he knew it was the night for boiled mutton and parsley sauce—and throw it at her neat pompadour. He was ashamed of himself, that this should be so, but only for a moment did he attempt to deny to himself that it was so. Fear—the fear of the male who lives for, and with, and by a woman—had him in its clutches, but fear was not strong enough to deter him, it only made him ponder as to what lie he had better tell.

Enid's voice meandered on, and long habit made it possible for him to answer "yes" and "no" in the proper places, while at the same time his mind kept up a soliloquy that ran as follows: "It is no good telling her you have promised to dine with George Smith, because she will find out you have not; and, anyway, she will wonder why she has not been asked, too. It's no good telling her you've got to go out on business, because she'll want to know all about it. It's no good saying the chief wants to see you, because then she would insist on giving you your dinner first, and that's just what you're not going to be able to stand this evening. You've got to invent something new."

"And I really don't know what the tradespeople are coming to!" finished Enid.

"Bolshevism," answered Ronald mechanically, still listening to the conversation in his own mind, and hoping for an inspiration.

"So you see," went on Enid, "it's not my fault. You know I always manage the best end of the neck and the parsley sauce for Thursdays, but there are some sardines which you can have, as well as an omelette."

A gleam of light shone into Ronald's mind. He heard his own voice saying: "As a matter of fact, it's rather lucky, because I have got to be out to dinner to-night. I'd have sent you a telegram, only I thought it would be nicer if I came home and saw you first, as I had a little time to spare."

"Out to dinner!" Enid sat up in her long wicker chair and stared at him. "What on earth for?"

Again Ronald found his voice answering for him. He marvelled, with a twinge of horror, at the ease with which the words came from his mouth.

"An old school friend of mine, you have often heard me speak of him—Jim Matlock—turned up at the office this afternoon," said Ronald. "He's only going through town, just back from Nigeria on leave, and I promised to dine with him."

"It's funny he didn't ask me," said Enid, in rather an offended tone.

"It's a bachelor party—he's got two other fellows coming."

"That means you'll be late, I suppose," remarked Enid disapprovingly.

"I'll sleep in the spare room," said Ronald eagerly, almost too eagerly he felt, the moment the words were out of his mouth, but for once Enid did not pounce.

"I shan't be able to get a wink of sleep until you come in, anyway," Enid said discontentedly; "still, I suppose it will give me a better chance if you use the spare room. The bed is aired, but I will have a hot water bottle put in to-night."

"Right-ho!" said Ronald. "Well, I suppose I'd better be off."

"Wait a minute," said Enid. "You might tell me some more, I shan't see you again to-night, and you go off so quickly in the mornings that I never seem to hear anything."

"Tell you more about what?"

"About Jim Matlock."

"My dear girl, you know about Jim Matlock. I've often mentioned him to you."

"I know you were at St. Paul's together, but I thought you hadn't even heard of him for years. It seems so funny his turning up now like this."

Ronald glanced at her sharply, but saw she was quite unsuspicious and merely cross-questioning him because of that irritating curiosity of hers which sprang from no real interest, but rather from a nervous suspicion that she was being what she would have called "left out" of things.

"Old Jim never did write letters," Ronald answered easily. "Just the sort of chap who would turn up suddenly from the ends of the earth and walk in on you as though you had only parted the day before."

"Oh, well," said Enid, "I suppose you will have a nice evening. I can manage quite well with the sardines."

Ronald knew she would manage quite well with the sardines; in fact, that she would enjoy the sensation of having been economical and ill-used, and he felt it unfair that she should claim—as her tone unmistakably did claim—pity for doing something that she liked. He said goodbye to her rather hastily and went out of the house, banging the door in an unwonted manner behind him.

Enid, left feeling suddenly forlorn upon her long chair, gave a sensitive little shiver as the thin walls of the house vibrated.

Ronald walked down the road without an idea in his head as to what he was going to do, but in his heart was a feeling of release and lightness so disproportionate to the trivial occasion and the short space of freedom that lay before him, that he realised it was almost ridiculous.

After all, what was it he was tired of? A comfortable home, wholesome meals, an excellent wife . . . What was it he wanted? An uncomfortable home, scrappy meals, a careless wife, or—worst thought of all to one of his conventionality—someone who was not a wife at all? He pushed the idea away from him—that, of course, was sheer nonsense. What he wanted was himself, his own self once more, the self that spun all the fancies to him when he came back in the train, the self that kept pace with him as a boy, that had taken no heed to the morrow, had not been bowed down by rates and taxes, and all the responsi-

bilities of a citizen, that had been free to eat what and where he liked without regard to a clock or the coldly watchful eyes of some other human being who considered it her right to eat with him.

Ronald found himself back at the station again and taking a ticket for Piccadilly Circus; he decided to dine at a little restaurant in Soho—or rather, he did not so much decide upon the idea as drifted into it. In Soho one saw such different kinds of people from those he was accustomed to, or so he imagined. Ronald was too unsophisticated to know that it is in Soho that suburbia dines out with the object of seeing life and instead sees itself sitting at nearly every other table in the room.

Ronald felt that he would meet high adventure that night, that he was just about to turn the corner which the young in heart feel ever just ahead of them, and he felt, too, that round the corner there would be someone waiting for him. Absurd, of course. Yet his heart felt like that of a young poet as he adventured into the unknown land of Soho.

Jim Matlock stayed in town a great deal longer than had at first appeared likely, so Ronald explained to Enid when she expressed a mild surprise that "passing through town" should entail such a long stay in it. Even after he had gone to visit his friends in Berkshire, Mr. Matlock was always running up to town again.

"After being stuck for years in the bush," explained Ronald, "a chap always feels like that about London. He gets the creeps in the country and just wants to cram as much London as ever he can into his leave. I have heard of it before."

He thanked his stars that Enid was not hospitable and that having anyone to dinner always seemed to her such a terrible undertaking that she never willingly embarked upon it. She began to grow offended, however, that Mr. Matlock had not invited her out, and was hardly appeased when Ronald explained that old Jimmy had always been afraid of women.

The crash, of course, was bound to come. Only a desperate dreamer like Ronnie could have hoped to put it off forever.

One day while he was still at the office—a day on which he had told her he was dining with Jim—a letter from West Africa fell with a little flop through the letter-slit and on to the doormat of the Lightfoots' villa. The postman gave but a perfunctory knock, the flap of the letter-slit the mildest "ping," yet Destiny's voice, still and small but imperative, was in both the commonplace sounds.

Enid was lying on the wicker couch, as usual, when the little maid brought in the letter upon the Benares brass tray. Enid picked it up languidly, glanced at it, saw it was for Ronald, and was about to put it on his bureau for him when her attention was arrested by the Nigerian stamp. There are moments in life, moments which come even to the least sensitive and imaginative, when a flashing instinct supplies with a deadly certainty the place of knowledge. Such a moment came to Enid as she sat up on her long chair, staring at that Nigerian stamp. She still sat looking at the letter when the maid had lumpily left the room. She knew that Ronnie had been deceiving her for weeks, that Jim Matlock had never come to England on leave, and that this was a letter from him which she sat holding in her shaking hands. The unlikely had happened—Jim Matlock, who had not written to Ronnie for years, had sent this letter just at the very time when a Mill's bomb, unwrapped from innocent swathings of brown paper, could not have caused more havoc. A chance feeling of loneliness, an extra "peg" that conduced to a sentimental view of old days—some such whim on the part of the casual gentleman who had sat and penned this letter on the veranda of his hot, up-country bungalow, and the trim villa at Chiswick was like to be wrecked.

After a minute's hesitation, Enid opened the letter. It was entirely un-noteworthy. Jim had been "thinking over old times," wondering "how you are getting on in double harness, old fellow"—deplored that he, the writer, had to live in a state of single unblessedness as "this is no country for a white woman, and there's nothing for a poor devil like myself but black women." Enid shuddered and put down the letter.

"Men—all men are alike!" So ran her quick thought.

Then, with a sharper pang, "Ronnie—not a black woman, of course, but still a woman. A woman whom he has been meeting—dining with—"

But this sort of thing did not happen. Not to people like herself and her husband—nice people. Only in newspapers. One read of cases, but that was just names in newspapers. Yet this was real—achingly, insultingly real. She sprang to her feet and paced up and down the little drawing-room.

Suddenly she glanced at her watch. Four o'clock. Time to get to Ronald's office before it closed. She could follow him, see where he went, confront him when he was with the partner of his guilt. The right words came instinctively to Enid. She felt like someone in a book, as she stood in her bedroom tying the thick veil round her hat with fingers that fumbled. Delicacy of body and mind were both gone from her as she started on her quest.

Ronnie came out of his office that evening, and for a moment stood sniffing the air and the savour of his freedom. It couldn't go on for ever, he knew that. Even Nigerian leaves are not eternal, and even the woman-hating Jim could not refrain from all courtesy to the wife of such an intimate friend as Ronnie was proving himself to be. Perhaps, just because of this knowledge, the joy of that evening seemed keener to Ronnie than ever before. He started off at a swinging pace down Mincing Lane. It was a fine evening and he mounted to the top of a bus. Not without some pushing, that ordinarily she would have condemned as unwomanly, did Enid scramble into a seat near the door, where she could keep an eye on the steps. In fact, to put it mildly, it would have been as easy to keep a tiger off that bus as the frail Enid. She raised her veil, for the effort had exhausted her, but sat well back in the corner.

Ronnie descended near Bloomsbury, and went off at his long, swinging pace down a side street, Enid, with the veil lowered again, pattering after him. She was really feeling ill by now, what with the unaccustomed exertion, the hurry he was forcing upon her, and the tumult of her outraged pride, that beat in her pulses and surged up

in her heart with all the physical violence that deeply-stricken love could have summoned. Under the thick veil her lips, at first so bitterly set, were parted, and her breath came in little gasps. Two spots of hard colour burnt on her usually pale cheeks, and the fair pompadour clung damply to her brow.

At last the end came. Ronnie turned into a square, one of those old Bloomsbury squares that once sheltered satin-clad rakish members of the nobility, and now vary between high art and low lodgings. Ronnie ran up the steps of one of the houses and produced a latchkey. A moment later he had opened the door and was passing through it.

Enid just reached the top step in time to prevent him from shutting the door in her face. She gave a little gasping cry to attract his attention, and he paused with the knob of the latch in his hand and peered at her. She was against the light, and for a moment, what with the thick veil and the unexpectedness, the appalling quality that her being there at all held for him, he failed to take in the extent of his disaster.

"I am coming in," gasped Enid. He made a swift movement and barred the entrance.

"I insist on coming in!" her voice rose in the terrible way it always did when she was excited, and he winced. He saw his lovely castle of dreams, his life that he had so lovingly built up for himself, shiver and break at the sound, as a wine glass shivers and breaks at a certain note played on the fiddle. He stood aside with the sudden hopelessness of a defeated man, and she went past him into the hall, and he shut the door behind her.

It seemed by no means a house of vice, gilded or otherwise. The narrow passage was papered with a dirty yellow-marbled paper, a couple of dowdy umbrellas stood beneath a shabby bowler that hung on the shining mahogany hatstand and about the whole house there hung that unmistakable smell that those who have lived much in lodgings know so well. Enid looked round her. Oddly enough, there floated dimly through her mind a slight feeling of outrage that her husband should deceive her in

such surroundings as these. They seemed somehow to cheapen her, Enid—

"Where is it?" she asked.

"Where is what?" asked Ronnie, playing for time, futile though he knew it to be. If only he could have two minutes upstairs before her!

"Your room." She found her lips would not say "her room," which was in her mind.

"Enid, don't insist on coming up. You'll only be sorry for it."

"You mean you'll be sorry for it, I suppose?"

"I!" Ronnie laughed at that. "Sorry" seemed such an inadequate expression for what this invasion would mean to him. He turned and led the way upstairs. Up and up they went in silence, till the carpet left off and oilcloth began. "Cheap" said Enid's mind to her. "Cheap, cheap!" Like some malign sparrow.

At the door of the back room on the top floor, Ronnie paused, with his hand on the handle, and looked at Enid. There were no signs of relenting on her face, which seemed haggard and old now the unbecoming veil was pushed up in a hard line over the brow.

Ronnie turned the door-handle and walked in ahead of his wife. Enid noted the fact with another surge of resentment.

The first thing which she noticed was that the room was horribly untidy, the next that one woman's face looked out at her from walls and mantel. Sometimes grave, sometimes laughing, yet it was obviously always the same woman—young, absurdly young—with black bobbed hair and dark eyes. An untidy girl who matched the room. In most of the sketches, none of which were framed, she wore a blue pinafore and in one she wore nothing at all. There was a curious quality about all the pictures which Enid did not quite understand, a vagueness, and uncertainty that seemed due to something other than the fact that the sketches were all poor and amateurish in execution. Not that Enid was a critic, she only knew that they were Ronnie's work because they were the sort of thing he used to do in Chiswick until she broke him of

it because it made such a nasty mess. And it wasn't as if he were really any good, she did know that much, because he had never been able to sell anything.

She turned from her examination and looked about the room. It was plainly whitewashed and a wide band of brown paper had been fastened with drawing-pins all round at the level of the eyes, and on this were pasted the sketches. There were a few little landscapes, too—fuzzy green things, with blue skies. The curtains at the dormer window were a brilliant orange, and in the window-box some snap-dragons were flaming bravely. The table was littered with water-colour paints, brushes, and scraps of paper; from the half-open door of the cupboard showed some tins of biscuits and such things. Two shabby comfortable-looking easy-chairs were drawn up, one on either side of the hearth, where a fire was laid, but unlit. Books—shabby, well-read looking books—leant at all angles on a couple of shelves beyond the fireplace.

It was a shabby room, a dirty room, an untidy room, but a lovable room. It held the spirit of home, and a queer spiritual beauty—or so Ronnie thought, as he looked round it with despairing eyes. To Enid, the whole sordid scene was the fitting frame for that vulgar face—that face which mocked at her with its youth and modernity. Bobbed hair. . . .

"Who is she? I've got to know. Who is she?"

"I sha'n't tell you."

"I shall find out."

"You can't."

"I shall ask the landlady."

"She doesn't know."

"Then I shall have a detective turned on to you."

"Enid!"

"Oh, yes, 'Enid'! What good do you think that's going to do? Did you imagine I should put up with it?"

A gleam of something that looked like hope flashed across Ronnie's face and was gone.

"Do you mean you want to divorce me?"

Enid was shaken. Divorce was not a solution that seemed possible to her—it was not a factor that ever

entered into the circle of such as she. People who lived in respectable suburbs didn't divorce—only "Society" people. Of course, Ronald would have to allow her enough money to live on. But the shame of it! She, the best of wives, unable to keep her husband. Alone —and yet not a widow. No, no, she didn't want that. She only wanted to know—to know everything—to torture herself and him with repetition of the knowledge once it was hers.

"Who is it? You must tell me. I must know," she insisted. "I've a right to know, and I will!"

"Look here!" said Ronnie, taking two quick turns up and down the little room and avoiding looking at her. "I swear I haven't been what you mean by unfaithful to you. Won't you believe me, and let it go at that?"

She laughed shrilly.

"You must think me a fool!" she said.

He went and leaned on the window-sill, with his head on his hands, and stared out over the flowers into the lambent field of the summer sky. He felt he knew what the books meant when they talked of your heart aching within you. He had to give beauty up into the hands of this woman who was a stranger to him—her hard, capable, neat hands with their dry touch.

"I'll tell you," he said, "but I warn you that when I have, I may have to go away altogether. I—" he hesitated.

"It's rather a question of whether I'll take you back, isn't it?" she answered coldly.

He turned back to her and said a rather curious thing.

"I'm afraid you won't think so when you know," he said slowly, "but I'll tell you, though I don't think you'll understand."

Enid sat down in one of the armchairs; but Ronald did not take the one opposite her, but remained standing. That would have been too much, to have sat opposite to her at that hearth.

"What do you mean?" said Enid. "I don't see why it should be hard to understand anything about a man. You're all the same." And through her mind ran the

letter from Nigeria. Here it's a girl with bobbed hair, but it's always someone. They can't live without. A woman's spirit means nothing to them. They're gross, that's what they are—gross—

Meanwhile, this particular specimen of grossness went on speaking, at first choosing his words with almost painful care, as though anxious once and for all to express the uttermost edge of meaning, then, as the unwonted lifting of the sluice-gates became too much for him, the pent-up torrent of years flowed forth, battering at her undefended shores.

"I'm going to hurt you pretty badly, I'm afraid," said Ronnie. "But you've chosen to follow me here and you've got to know. To know what I've been thinking. What I've been feeling like for ages past. About you, and the house, and everything. At first, though, of course, our marriage wasn't a bit like I'd hoped and thought—you see I'd thought you really liked being fond of me, and that we should enjoy life so together—"

He saw her lips tighten, and he threw in quickly, almost scornfully:

"Oh, I know you think 'all that sort of thing' isn't nice—that you only put up with it because you thought it your duty. Well, when I found that out I accepted it. I didn't want forced kisses. I put all that behind me—"

"Of course, I knew that was what was the matter," interjected Enid.

"But it wasn't. It wasn't that at all. I don't say I was happy, but I tried to behave decently, and I did."

"Until now!" said Enid scornfully. He paid no attention to the interruption, but went on as if she had not spoken.

"It was the house I couldn't stand."

Enid stared at him in surprise.

"The house? But you liked it when we took it. And you said nothing when we renewed the lease only the other day. We could have moved—"

"Moved!" He laughed. "Moved! It would have been the same in any house. It was too well run."

"You must be mad."

"No. Thousands of men, I dare say, feel the same. You say we're all alike."

"You can't say I didn't make you comfortable."

"I do say it. That's just what I do say. You sacrificed me to the running of the house. It wasn't a home—it was a house. You sank the home in the house. The hateful house with its 'days' for this, and its 'days' for that, and its same meals on the same days, and its tidiness!"

"I'm sure I always let you smoke anywhere."

"Yes—with an eye on what I do with the ash."

"Apparently you'd have been happier in a pigsty."

"I believe I should."

"Like this—"

"Exactly. Like this. If only I could have found a sock with a hole in it, it would have been some relief. But everything was always just-so. No flowers, unless I brought them home, and then you didn't like the mess they made. No gardening for the same reason—mud through the house. Always the same things—what the butcher said, what the milkman said—as though I cared what they said. I tell you I even knew which room had been cleaned by the smell when I came in. Always the awful assumption that these things were the things that mattered—the things that made up a home. They don't. They only make a house, and a house that grows and grows till it smothers you. Oh! I'm not saying I wanted to be neglected, to get no meals, to find my clothes all anyhow, no man does; but I didn't want to be made a slave to meals and clothes and clean rooms, and all the rest of it. And I was. Heavens! What a slave—afraid to have a soul, let alone call it my own! For ages I thought it was all quite right and that there must be something wrong with me. I believed you when you said what a good manager and housekeeper you were. I thought you must know more about it than I. And the dullness of it grew over me till it nearly choked me."

Enid was white, a little pulse beat in her thin temple.

"Then, one evening it was just suddenly too much. I felt I must get out of it if only for that once. I invented

Matlock's leave. I had an evening of freedom—of perfect freedom. I took as long as I liked over my dinner; I had things that tasted nice without any nourishment in them; I strolled about the streets afterwards—anywhere, so long as I could stay out of it."

"Out of it!" Enid voiced her violated feelings in a cry. "Out of the house I'd always worked so hard over, worked myself nearly to death over, when I'm sure I wasn't fit."

Her hat was askew, the tears stood in her eyes, her fair thin hair had come down on one side and clung to her damp cheek. She looked like a woman suddenly lost, pathetic, unbearably pathetic in her bewilderment. Ronnie made a step towards her. After all, there were memories, and, even more potent than memories, a whole habit of life, that bound them together, that made what was a pain for the one a pain for the other also, in some queer way. Enid made a corresponding step towards him. She was more of a woman now that her womanhood had been insulted and outraged than ever before. She might not have cared for him "in that way" but he was her husband after all. A desolating sense of loss swept through her, urged her towards the man who had inflicted it on her. She took hold of his coat lapels.

"Ronald, I may not have always understood. Running the house properly has always been so important to me, but I dare say I can alter some things."

He patted her shoulder, but said nothing.

"Only this—this woman: I can't bear that. You'll give her up? We'll see if we can't begin again."

"Oh, yes, I'll give her up," said Ronnie.

A glow of triumph went through her. After all, being a man's wife did count for something. She still had power, and this girl, however young she was, did not possess irresistible attractions.

She stared round at the pictured face, the aching at her heart assuaged by her victory. She felt she could stare now without being abased by what she saw.

"Only you must tell me who she is," she said sharply, "you must do that. I won't risk meeting her. I must know."

For a moment he stared at her as though, as she told herself impatiently, he really did not know what she was talking about. Then for the third time he laughed, but this laugh had in it a queer quality of heartbreak that even Enid heard.

"That's just the worst part of it," he said. "There isn't anyone."

"How do you mean, isn't anyone?"

"She"—he waved his hand at the sketches, but without looking at them—"doesn't exist. Never has existed. She's out of my head."

"I don't understand."

"I tell you I made her up, out of my head. There isn't anyone. You can ask the landlady if you don't believe me. She's what I have imagined, what I've imagined it might be like, that's all."

"You mean there isn't any woman?"

"Only the one I made up for myself. I suppose I was too much of a coward still for anything else; besides it wasn't so much that—that I wanted. That might have made new chains. I wanted freedom—freedom to be comfortable. I've just eaten where and when I liked, and gone to the pictures and come back here, and pretended it was home—that's all."

They were left staring at each other across the ruins of his confession, staring bleakly, like two people deprived of hope.

"Yet you did make up a woman to share the home with you," she said with difficulty.

He looked at the two shabby armchairs and glanced away again. He thought of the evenings when the person in the armchair opposite his had seemed almost real to him —when this ridiculous girl with her untidy clothes and her fingers stained with paint—they had both been artists in this new life—had laughed with him over a scratch meal of sardines and jam and a flask of cheap Chianti. She had not been the chief part of his escape but she had been a very definite expression of what he wanted and never had. He answered Enid slowly.

"Yes, I suppose there's always the wish one could have

been happy as well as comfortable. It would have been rather wonderful."

Oddly enough, considering the type of woman she was, it did not occur to Enid to disbelieve him. There was that in his voice and eyes which forbade it. And as she glanced round at the amateurish sketches she saw what it was that had given that quality of vagueness to the pictured face. It was not a real face at all. It lacked that subtle disproportion which is beauty and individuality. It was just a face idealised by Ronnie out of a vague vision in his mind, like a Harrison Fisher girl from the cover of *Nash's Magazine*, excepting that this was not so real because it was not so solidly and well drawn. But, like a girl on a magazine cover it was just two eyes, a nose, and a mouth. It had none of the oddness which every human face possesses and Enid felt such a hate surge up in her heart as turned her almost physically sick. A woman of flesh and blood she might have fought; he might have grown tired of this second woman as he had of herself; he would certainly have discovered imperfections, and habit would have destroyed charm. But this ideal, this lived-with monstrosity of perfection, this crystallising of all his secret longings, this—and here lay the worst—this exact opposite, mentally and physically, to herself, how was she to fight a creature at once so unsubstantial and so deep-rooted?

She passed her tongue over her dry lips, and with a shaking hand pulled down the veil to hide her blurring eyes.

"We must go home," she said mechanically. "Ellen won't know what to do about dinner."

He made a great effort over himself.

"Won't you—wouldn't you like to dine somewhere instead?" he asked. "There are plenty of little restaurants—"

"Ellen will wonder where we are."

"Then we'll take a taxi. You are tired."

At the door of the room she paused and looked round.

"This room—of course, you can keep it on if you like," she said with an effort equal to his.

"No, not now. It wouldn't be any good."

"Then you'll burn these—these pictures?" she asked urgently.

"Yes, I'll burn them. They aren't any good either."

But the girl with the bobbed hair and the dark eyes went home with them in the extravagance of the taxi, all the same. She sat between them, quiet and still, and she burned in Enid's heart. But what Ronnie was regretting the most, with a resigned and dreary acceptance of life as it had to be lived, was the untidyness, the dust, the shabby armchairs, the meals of "made-up dishes" and the tobacco ash that he had grown so used to dropping on the floor.

# OLD GADGETT[1]

## By SHEILA KAYE-SMITH

(From *Cassell's Weekly* and *Harper's Magazine*)

THE landlord, the landlord's wife and the landlord's son were sitting in the bar of the "George" at Bullockdean. It wanted about twenty minutes to opening time, and the potboy was polishing the glasses in readiness for six o'clock. The landlord was reading his newspaper—if he couldn't finish it now he'd get no opportunity later, and he liked to be able to talk a bit of politics with the farmers who drank in his bar; his wife was busy with her knitting and counting her stitches out loud, to the suppressed annoyance of his son, who was reading *The Blood on the Wall: a New Adventure of Detective Jim.*

There was a shuffling, scurrying sound outside, followed by a rap on the door.

"Go and see who that is, Dan," said the landlord's wife. "We aren't open yet."

The boy rose regretfully and unlocked the door, revealing an ancient shepherd in charge of some dusty sheep.

"Hullo, Mr. Gadgett! What brings you around at this time?"

" 'Tis agone six o'clock, Maas' Sheather."

"Not for half an hour," called the landlord's wife.

Mr. Gadgett consulted an elderly turnip.

"My watch says three o'clock, which means ten minnut past six," he affirmed.

"And my clock says half past five, which means half past five," said Mrs. Sheather.

The old man heaved a deep sigh.

"I come all the way from Brakey Bottom, and there's a

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wunnerful lot of dust on the roads. Leastways, it was wunst on the roads—reckon it's all in my throat now."

"Poor old chap," said the landlord, "I can't see any harm in serving him. It's nearly opening time."

"Oh no, it isn't," said his wife, "and even if it was only two minutes to six, you'd be breaking the law just the same. The law's a fine thing, ain't it, Mr. Gadgett?"

The shepherd looked confused and weary.

"Wot wud six o'clock and two o'clock and ten o'clock, I'm wunnerful muddled."

Dan felt sorry for him.

"Maybe we could let you have a cup of tea, since it's too early for beer," he suggested.

"Well, you go into the kitchen and make it," said his mother, "since you're the only one who's doing nothing."

Dan accepted the statement good-humoredly, though his heart yearned for Detective Jim.

"I'm a fine handy one with the tea, ain't I, mum? You come around to the kitchen door, Mr. Gadgett, and I'll give you something to lay the dust."

Life had taught Daniel Sheather to be handy at most things: he had none of the usual awkwardness and shame of a man making tea. He blew up the dying kitchen fire into a fine roar, filled the kettle with fresh water, fetched tea from the caddy and a cup from the shelf just as efficiently, and a good deal more graciously, than his mother would have done. Old Gadgett watched him from the chair where he sat stiffly, as one unused to rest.

"You're a wunnerful kind young chap, Maas' Sheather, and some day if you'll come around to my house I'll show you wot I ain't shown nobody yet."

"And what may that be?" asked Daniel.

The old man dropped his voice to a husky whisper.

"My teeth."

"Your teeth!"

"Yes, you come around to my house and I'll show you my teeth."

"But I didn't know as you had any," said Dan, with a rather tactless stare at the thin, receding old mouth.

"No, there ain't many as knows. I don't go wearing them

about the place. But I've a wunnerful fine set of teeth."

"Got 'em at the hospital?" asked Dan, as he set the tea on the table.

Mr. Gadgett, with deliberate, shaking hands, emptied his cup into his saucer, and supped a few mouthfuls before answering impressively:

"No—not I. I made 'em myself."

"Reckon that was smart of you. How did you do it?"

"It's taken me nigh on ten year. They're sheep's teeth, wot I've picked up on the hill, and rubbed 'em and filed 'em till they're a proper size. And I've strung 'em on two wires, and I hitch 'em around two old stumps I've got . . . you never saw the like."

Dan was properly impressed.

"Reckon you're a hem clever man, Mr. Gadgett; and I bet you find 'em useful at supper time."

Mr. Gadgett looked superior.

"Oh, I'd never use 'em for eating. They ain't that kind of teeth—and I don't say as I can rightly speak wud 'em, I wear 'em for the looks of things. Some day I mean to have my likeness took wud them in. But if you come around to my house I'll show 'em to you."

"I'll be proud."

"Reckon it ain't everyone I'd show 'em to. But you've done me a kindness to-day, Maas' Sheather, and it ain't the fust. I often wish as my poor Ellen cud see my teeth, for many's the times she's said: 'if we cud only get you fitted for a set of teeth, maaster'. . . . Maybe it's that wot put the notion into my head, and I'm larmentable sorry she didn't live to see wot I done. Howsumdever, they may have told her where she's gone. . . . There's my dog barking—reckon the sheep's uneasy; I mun be off, or I'll never be over the hill by sundown. Thank you kindly for the tea, Maas' Sheather."

He went out, comfortable and slaked. It was now nearly six—a few more minutes would have seen him in legal enjoyment of a glass of beer—but, reflected Daniel, a cup of tea was better for these old chaps.

It was some weeks before he redeemed his promise to "call around," and there may have been some excuse in

the fact that calling around involved a four-mile tramp across the downs to Alciston. But one evening he met the district nurse, who told him that old Gadgett had taken to his bed with rheumatism, and was not likely ever to leave it again.

"Poor old chap—it ud be a kindness if you'd call and see him, Mr. Sheather. He's been asking for you more than once. I don't think he'll ever be out with his sheep again, though I tell him he will, just to keep him quiet—he's terribly worried as to how they can manage without him at Place Farm."

"I can't come to-night, but I'll come to-morrow. Will that do?"

"Oh, fine. He'll be delighted, poor old soul."

So the next evening Dan set off for Alciston and Place Farm, across Heighton Down, the playground of sea winds and battleground of forgotten armies, and then through a webbing of obscure, chalky lanes, to a small, osier-thatched cottage, huddled against the outlying ricks of Place.

The district nurse had just taken her leave, after having made the old man comfortable for the night. He was sitting up in bed, propped against pillows, in the dusky, sag-roofed bedroom, which was so full of furniture that Dan had difficulty in threading his way through to the bedside.

"Hullo, Mr. Gadgett!"

The shepherd did not return his greeting, and when he sat down within the dim circle of the candlelight, he knew the reason. Mr. Gadgett was wearing his teeth.

For a moment Daniel, too, was speechless.

The sight before him was truly an astounding one. The old man had set out not only to supply nature's deficiency but to improve on her perfect work. Instead of thirty-two teeth, he had fifty, twenty-five in each row. The result was a grin of terrible magnitude. . . . Daniel gaped—fortunately he did not feel inclined to laugh. When he considered that the wonder had been given its proper due of amazement the shepherd's jaws worked convulsively as he freed them to express his satisfaction.

"Wunnerful, ain't it?"

"Surelye, Mr. Gadgett."

"You never thought to see such a set of teeth. A dentist couldn't do it more fine."

"That he couldn't."

"It's took me nigh on ten year, getting 'em all together and fixing 'em proper. And now I mun be thinking of having my likeness took, but I'm that stiff in my bones as maybe it'll be some days before I'm up on the hill—let alone I get into the town."

"How are you feeling to-night?"

"I feel valiant, save as there's aches in all my bones, and the power is agone from my legs. I asked God how am I to follow the sheep on the hill if He takes the power out of my legs like this?"

"Reckon you'll be better for a good long rest."

"I'm not so set on that. I'd sooner be out wud the sheep on the hill. But it ain't reasonable to expect it of me, and I've always understood as the Lord is properly reasonable."

Dan said nothing, feeling uncertain of the matter.

"There's that nurse is an unreasonable woman," continued the old man—"to think of me come down to having a nurse, and I done for myself this last twenty year. She's all for putting things where they don't belong, and the trouble I've had wud her notions you'd never believe: 'I'm biling the kettle fur your hot water, Mr. Gadgett, to give you a bit of a wash.' A bit of a wash! And she washes my chest and my back, which no mortal Christian ud wash between October and May—and she calls that a bit of a wash. . . . I'm like to take my death of cold wud her bits and tricks. . . . She's an unreasonable woman, wot shall never see my teeth. And she's agone and opened the winder, wot's never bin opened since my poor Ellen died and we let her spirit go out on to the hill."

Daniel was beginning to feel drowsy in the little room, full of the shadows of its crowded furniture. Outside a faint wind had risen and droned under the eaves.

"If I cud only get out to my sheep. There's that fool Botolph's got 'em now. . . . Reckon he'll have 'em all straggled—and the lambing not so far. . . . I mun be up fur the lambing."

"You'll be up, sure enough, Mr. Gadgett."

"I mun be up, surelye; or . . . this is a tarble thing to have happened to a poor old man past seventy year. I'm fretted after my sheep; and there's my likeness I want taken. Maas' Sheather, I mun have my likeness taken before I go. So as everyone ull know wot I looked like, wearing my teeth. . . ."

The old voice quavered—evidently Mr. Gadgett felt strongly on the subject.

"Not an illness had I as boy or man," he continued, "and now in my old age it comes upon me. Howsumdever, I'll always say as the Lord ain't unreasonable, and I'd have naught against Him if I cud get out to my sheep on the hill . . . before that fool Botolph spiles their fleeces. And if you're going, lad, you mun shut that winder, and I'll tell the nurse as it shut of isself."

Daniel Sheather was courting, or he would not have allowed another long interval to elapse before he went to see Mr. Gadgett again. However, when everything was settled between him and Marion Stace, he reproached himself for his neglect.

"Let's call around and see him to-night," he said to his girl; "he'd be rare pleased to see you, and it'll be a fine, friendly walk for us over the hill."

So they went out in the last sunshine of the June day, in the slow raking yellow light which strokes the Downs before sunset. Their shadows, long and clear of line, went before them to Alciston, though they lost them in the Bostal Way, where the dusk was already lying between the banks. They found them again in the big ploughed fields of Place, moving over the bright, fierce green of the young oats. . . . Sometimes they were separate, sometimes they were one mingled darkness in which Daniel and Marion stood, as it were married by the sun.

"I'd like us to live in a little house like that," said Marion when she saw old Gadgett's cottage.

"Ho!" said Dan—"I'll give you a better. Brick and slate and a couple of bow windows. . . ."

"But this is what I like best, surelye."

"Lath and plaster and osier-thatch! I'll give you better. . . ."

They went in and found the old man propped up and waiting for them. But he had changed a good deal since Daniel's last visit. The tan was fading from his hands and cheeks, leaving him the queer ghost of himself, who had always been brown as a russet pear. He was also a little inclined to wander in his mind. Daniel was unable to make him quite understand who Marion was. Sometimes she ceased to be Maas' Sheather's young woman, and became a daughter, Mary, or even once the girl Ellen Bourne, who afterward had been Ellen Gadgett for thirty-five years.

But he willingly showed her his teeth, which he kept under his pillow wrapped in a clean cotton handkerchief.

"They're to be buried with me," he said, showing his acceptance of that final unreasonableness which allowed not only sickness but death to claim him after seventy-five years.

"Don't talk of burying, Mr. Gadgett," said Daniel, working at the old illusion, "you'll be out again yet."

"No—never again. I mun know it. I'll die in this bed where I lie. Passon he's been to see me, and he reads me solemn out of the Book. Reckon the time's come when I mun go to my own Shepherd. I'd say naun if it wurn't fur the lambing, and that I was unaccountable set on going into the town and having my likeness taken. I asked Passon and Doctor both for a lift into town in their traps, but they both said it cudn't be done. It's a sad thing, surelye—for all the time I was a-making 'em I thought of how fine it ud be to have my likeness took wud a full set of teeth—me as they've soaked the bread fur a dunnamany year. . . . My crusts in hot water, you remember, my dear—so as they shudn't be wasted. You was a wunnerful girl fur waste. . . ."

They left him a few minutes after that, and on the doorstep found the parson, come for an evening call. When he had congratulated Daniel and Marion, they talked of the old man within.

"He won't last much longer now," said the vicar, "and one mustn't hope for it. His wife, daughters, everyone—all gone before him. He says he'll be glad to follow. But he's got a queer uncontrollable fancy to have his photograph taken.

He's asked both the doctor and me if he couldn't somehow be got into Lewes for it. I don't know who he wants to give it to—he hasn't a soul left."

"He was talking to us about that, sir," said Daniel.

"It's probably an effect of his illness—his mind wanders a bit. I offered to take a snapshot of him on a sunny day, but evidently he doesn't trust the amateur."

He went into the cottage, and the young couple started on their lingering walk over the Down.

They had so much in each other to absorb them that it was not till they were walking through the village that Marion said, "Daniel, why shouldn't you and me pay for a photographer to go out and take a likeness of old Mr. Gadgett?"

"Would he ever do such a thing?"

"Of course—if he's paid. Why, photographers went out to Beddingham Court the day Miss Alice was married, and took a likeness of her and her bridegroom—and they've been to Place for the foxhounds—and I dunno where else besides, for house parties and such."

"But that's only the big houses. They'd never go to old Gadgett."

"They'd go if we paid their price, and I don't see why we shouldn't. It'll be a dying comfort to the poor old man. Let's you and me, call in to Robins when we go to Lewes on Saturday, and if it costs a terrible lot of money, we can take it off the cake. . . ."

This might have been the reason why the Sheather-Stace wedding cake was only two tiers high. Still, everyone said it was a very good cake, and Daniel and Marion, standing flushed and stiff and happy in their respective bridal black and white had no regrets for that topmost crown with its sugar vase and silver hearts. They held secretly themselves the crowning sweetness and silver heart of life, so could dispense with sugar and paper images for their neighbors' delectation.

Besides, as Marion said and Daniel agreed, they had done the proper thing by Mr. Gadgett, poor old soul. He had had his likeness taken, as his heart desired, and they would never forget his delight, though pleasure expressed in

a smile of fifty teeth is not the most beautiful thing to remember.

He was almost in his last stupor then, slipping back more and more deeply into the past—into the days of Ellen Gadgett and Mary Gadgett, and deeper still into the days of Ellen Bourne, and then right down at last to the bottom of the house of his mind, where lived another Mary Gadgett, who used to give him his breakfast of flour dumpling and hot water before sending him out with his wooden rattle to scare the birds from the orchards of Heronsdale, over by Waldron where he was born.

But he revived when he saw them come in, Daniel and Marion, and Mr. Robins of Lewes High Street with his camera. They told him what was to happen, and with fumbling old hands he groped under his pillow for his cherished teeth. There they were, wrapped up and clean, and soon his pleasure was silent as (helped by Daniel this time) he fixed them ready for action.

Mr. Robins maintained his professional aloofness while the curtains were pulled to and fro over the tiny, hermetically shut window, and the light adjusted—a difficult matter in that low room of gleams and shadows.

"Now, quite still, please—while I count thirty. . . ."

And the marvel was accomplished.

The old man's work had been given its immortality: "Now everyone ull know I had a set of teeth as fine as anybody's."

It was the memory of those words which made Daniel and Marion put his photograph with its terrifying smile in a conspicuous place in their new parlor. Otherwise, it would have been excusable of them to have buried it in an album, or at least have hidden it behind the wedding-group on the chiffonier. . . .

"But he wanted himself to be seen," said Daniel.

So the neighbors saw what old Gadgett himself had never seen, for by the time the proofs were ready he had sunk back so far into the past that it had closed over his head, and neither the present nor the future, with its promise of survival for the work of his hands, could reach him where he drowsed in the old days—strange old days when

the railways had not come to Sussex and the stage coach still rolled and lurched in the ruts of the Lewes road . . . bad old days when farm laborers were paid eight shillings a week, and Mary Gadgett had tearfully sent her children out at dusk into the fields to steal turnips. . . .

The Sheathers made their selection from the proofs, doing their best to choose what they thought the old man would have wished. They still hoped he might come back to them for a little before the end, but by the time the prints arrived he was dead. He had followed his Ellen and his two Marys; and the little window of the stuffy room at last stood open, for old Gadgett had gone out on to the hill, to meet his own Shepherd.

# THE HORSE DEALER'S DAUGHTER[1]

By D. H. LAWRENCE

(From *The English Review*)

"WELL, Mabel, and what are you going to do with yourself?" asked Joe, with foolish flippancy. He felt quite safe himself. Without listening for an answer, he turned aside, worked a grain of tobacco to the tip of his tongue, and spat it out. He did not care about anything, since he felt safe himself.

The three brothers and the sister sat round the desolate breakfast table, attempting some sort of desultory consultation. The morning's post had given the final tap to the family fortunes, and all was over. The dreary dining-room itself, with its heavy mahogany furniture, looked as if it were waiting to be done away with.

But the consultation amounted to nothing. There was a strange air of ineffectuality about the three men, as they sprawled at table, smoking and reflecting vaguely on their own condition. The girl was alone, a rather short, sullen-looking young woman of twenty-seven. She did not share the same life as her brothers. She would have been good-looking, save for the impassive fixity of her face, "bull-dog," as her brothers called it.

There was a confused tramping of horses' feet outside. The three men all sprawled round in their chairs to watch. Beyond the dark holly-bushes that separated the strip of lawn from the highroad, they could see a cavalcade of shire horses swinging out of their own yard, being taken for exercise. This was the last time. These were the last horses

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that would go through their hands. The young men watched with critical, callous look. They were all frightened at the collapse of their lives, and the sense of disaster in which they were involved left them no inner freedom.

Yet they were three fine, well-set fellows enough. Joe, the eldest, was a man of thirty-three, broad and handsome in a hot, flushed way. His face was red, he twisted his black moustache over a thick finger, his eyes were shallow and restless. He had a sensual way of uncovering his teeth when he laughed, and his bearing was stupid. Now he watched the horses with a glazed look of helplessness in his eyes, a certain stupor of downfall.

The great draught-horses swung past. They were tied head to tail, four of them, and they heaved along to where a lane branched off from the highroad, planting their great hoofs floutingly in the fine black mud, swinging their great rounded haunches sumptuously, and trotting a few sudden steps as they were led into the lane, round the corner. Every movement showed a massive, slumbrous strength, and a stupidity which held them in subjection. The groom at the head looked back, jerking the leading rope. And the cavalcade moved out of sight up the lane, the tail of the last horse, bobbed up tight and stiff, held out taut from the swinging great haunches as they rocked behind the hedges in a motionlike sleep.

Joe watched with glazed hopeless eyes. The horses were almost like his own body to him. He felt he was done for now. Luckily he was engaged to a woman as old as himself, and therefore her father, who was steward of a neighbouring estate, would provide him with a job. He would marry and go into harness. His life was over, he would be a subject animal now.

He turned uneasily aside, the retreating steps of the horses echoing in his ears. Then, with foolish restlessness, he reached for the scraps of bacon-rind from the plates, and making a faint whistling sound, flung them to the terrier that lay against the fender. He watched the dog swallow them, and waited till the creature looked into his eyes. Then a faint grin came on his face, and in a high, foolish voice he said:

"You won't get much more bacon, shall you, you little b——?"

The dog faintly and dismally wagged its tail, then lowered its haunches, circled round, and lay down again.

There was another helpless silence at the table. Joe sprawled uneasily in his seat, not willing to go till the family conclave was dissolved. Fred Henry, the second brother, was erect, clean-limbed, alert. He had watched the passing of the horses with more *sang-froid*. If he was an animal, like Joe, he was an animal which controls, not one which is controlled. He was master of any horse, and he carried himself with a well-tempered air of mastery. But he was not master of the situations of life. He pushed his coarse brown moustache upwards, off his lip, and glanced irritably at his sister, who sat impassive and inscrutable.

"You'll go and stop with Lucy for a bit, shan't you?" he asked. The girl did not answer.

"I don't see what else you can do," persisted Fred Henry.

"Go as a skivvy," Joe interpolated laconically.

The girl did not move a muscle.

"If I was her, I should go in for training for a nurse," said Malcolm, the youngest of them all. He was the baby of the family, a young man of twenty-two, with a fresh, jaunty *museau*.

But Mabel did not take any notice of him. They had talked at her and round her for so many years, that she hardly heard them at all.

The marble clock on the mantel-piece softly chimed the half-hour, the dog rose uneasily from the hearthrug and looked at the party at the breakfast table. But still they sat on in ineffectual conclave.

"Oh, all right," said Joe suddenly, *à propos* of nothing. "I'll get a move on."

He pushed back his chair, straddled his knees with a downward jerk, to get them free, in horsey fashion, and went to the fire. Still he did not go out of the room; he was curious to know what the others would do or say. He began to charge his pipe, looking down at the dog and saying, in a high, affected voice:

"Going wi' me? Going wi' me are ter? Tha'rt goin' further than tha counts on just now, dost hear?"

The dog faintly wagged its tail, the man stuck out his jaw and covered his pipe with his hands, and puffed intently, losing himself in the tobacco, looking down all the while at the dog, with an absent brown eye. The dog looked up at him in mournful distrust. Joe stood with his knees stuck out, in real horsey fashion.

"Have you had a letter from Lucy?" Fred Henry asked of his sister.

"Last week," came the neutral reply.

"And what does she say?"

There was no answer.

"Does she *ask* you to go and stop there?" persisted Fred Henry.

"She says I can if I like."

"Well, then, you'd better. Tell her you'll come on Monday."

This was received in silence.

"That's what you'll do then, is it?" said Fred Henry, in some exasperation.

But she made no answer. There was a silence of futility and irritation in the room. Malcolm grinned fatuously.

"You'll have to make up your mind between now and next Wednesday," said Joe loudly, "or else find yourself lodgings on the kerbstone."

The face of the young woman darkened, but she sat on immutable.

"Here's Jack Fergusson!" exclaimed Malcolm, who was looking aimlessly out of the window.

"Where?" exclaimed Joe, loudly.

"Just gone past."

"Coming in?"

Malcolm craned his neck to see the gate.

"Yes," he said.

There was a silence. Mabel sat on like one condemned, at the head of the table. Then a whistle was heard from the kitchen. The dog got up and barked sharply. Joe opened the door and shouted:

"Come on."

After a moment, a young man entered. He was muffled up in overcoat and a purple woolen scarf, and his tweed cap, which he did not remove, was pulled down on his head. He was of medium height, his face was rather long and pale, his eyes looked tired.

"Hello Jack! Well, Jack!" exclaimed Malcolm and Joe. Fred Henry merely said "Jack!"

"What's doing?" asked the newcomer, evidently addressing Fred Henry.

"Same. We've got to be out by Wednesday.—Got a cold?"

"I have—got it bad, too."

"Why don't you stop in?"

"*Me* stop in? When I can't stand on my legs, perhaps I shall have a chance." The young man spoke huskily. He had a slight Scotch accent.

"It's a knock-out, isn't it," said Joe boisterously, "if a doctor goes round croaking with a cold. Looks bad for the patients, doesn't it?"

The young doctor looked at him slowly.

"Anything the matter with *you,* then?" he asked, sarcastically.

"Not as I know of. Damn your eyes, I hope not. Why?"

"I thought you were very concerned about the patients, wondered if you might be one yourself."

"Damn it, no, I've never been patient to no flaming doctor, and hope I never shall be," returned Joe.

At this point Mabel rose from the table, and they all seemed to become aware of her existence. She began putting the dishes together. The young doctor looked at her, but did not address her. He had not greeted her. She went out of the room with the tray, her face impassive and unchanged.

"When are you off then, all of you?" asked the doctor.

"I'm catching the eleven-forty," replied Malcolm. "Are you goin' down wi' th' trap, Joe?"

"Yes, I've told you I'm going down wi' th' trap, haven't I?"

"We'd better be getting her in then. So long, Jack, if

I don't see you before I go," said Malcolm, shaking hands.

He went out, followed by Joe, who seemed to have his tail between his legs.

"Well, this is the devil's own," exclaimed the doctor, when he was left alone with Fred Henry. "Going before Wednesday, are you?"

"That's the orders," replied the other.

"Where, to Northampton?"

"That's it."

"The devil!" exclaimed Fergusson, with quiet chagrin.

And there was silence between the two.

"All settled up, are you?" asked Fergusson.

"About."

There was another pause.

"Well, I shall miss yer, Freddy boy," said the young doctor.

"And I shall miss thee, Jack," returned the other.

"Miss you like hell," mused the doctor.

Fred Henry turned aside. There was nothing to say. Mabel came in again, to finish clearing the table.

"What are *you* going to do then, Miss Pervin?" asked Fergusson. "Going to your sister's, are you?"

Mabel looked at him with her steady, dangerous eyes, that always made him uncomfortable, unsettling his superficial ease.

"No," she said.

"Well, what in the name of fortune *are* you going to do? Say what you *mean* to do," cried Fred Henry, with futile intensity.

But she only averted her head, and continued her work. She folded the white table-cloth, and put on the chenille cloth.

"The sulkiest bitch that ever trod!" muttered her brother.

But she finished her task with perfectly impassive face, the young doctor watching her interestedly all the while. Then she went out.

Fred Henry stared after her, clenching his lips, his blue eyes fixing in sharp antagonism, as he made a grimace of sour exasperation.

"You could bray her into bits, and that's all you'd get out of her," he said, in a small, narrowed tone.

The doctor smiled faintly.

"What's she *going* to do then?" he asked.

"Strike me if *I* know!" returned the other.

There was a pause. Then the doctor stirred.

"I'll be seeing you to-night, shall I?" he said to his friend.

"Ay—where's it to be? Are we going over to Jessdale?"

"I don't know. I've got such a cold on me. I'll come round to the Moon and Stars, anyway."

"Let Lizzie and May miss their night for once, eh?"

"That's it—if I feel as I do now."

"All's one——"

The two young men went through the passage and down to the back door together. The house was large, but it was servantless now, and desolate. At the back was a small bricked house-yard, and beyond that a big square, gravelled fine and red, and having stables on two sides. Sloping, dank, winter-dark fields stretched away on the open sides.

But the stables were empty. Joseph Pervin, the father of the family, had been a man of no education, who had become a fairly large horse dealer. The stables had been full of horses, there was a great turmoil and come-and-go of horses and of dealers and grooms. Then the kitchen was full of servants. But of late things had declined. The old man had married a second time, to retrieve his fortunes. Now he was dead and everything was gone to the dogs, there was nothing but debt and threatening.

For months, Mabel had been servantless in the big house, keeping the home together in penury for her ineffectual brothers. She had kept house for ten years. But previously, it was with unstinted means. Then, however brutal and coarse everything was, the sense of money had kept her proud, confident. The men might be foul-mouthed, the women in the kitchen might have bad reputations, her brothers might have illegitimate children. But so long as there was money, the girl felt herself established, and brutally proud, reserved.

No company came to the house, save dealers and coarse men. Mabel had no associates of her own sex, after her sister went away. But she did not mind. She went regularly to church, she attended to her father. And she lived in the memory of her mother, who had died when she was fourteen, and whom she had loved. She had loved her father, too, in a different way, depending upon him, and feeling secure in him, until at the age of fifty-four he married again. And then she had set hard against him. Now he had died and left them all hopelessly in debt.

She had suffered badly during the period of poverty. Nothing, however, could shake the curious sullen, animal pride that dominated each member of the family. Now, for Mabel, the end had come. Still she would not cast about her. She would follow her own way just the same. She would always hold the keys of her own situation. Mindless and persistent, she endured from day to day. Why should she think? Why should she answer anybody? It was enough that this was the end, and there was no way out. She need not pass any more darkly along the main street of the small town, avoiding every eye. She need not demean herself any more, going into the shops and buying the cheapest food. This was at an end. She thought of nobody, not even of herself. Mindless and persistent, she seemed in a sort of ecstasy to be coming nearer to her fulfilment, her own glorification, approaching her dead mother, who was glorified.

In the afternoon she took a little bag, with shears and sponge and a small scrubbing brush, and went out. It was a grey, wintry day, with saddened, dark-green fields and an atmosphere blackened by the smoke of foundries not far off. She went quickly, darkly along the causeway, heeding nobody, through the town to the churchyard.

There she always felt secure, as if no one could see her, although as a matter of fact she was exposed to the stare of everyone who passed along under the churchyard wall. Nevertheless, once under the shadow of the great looming church, among the graves, she felt immune from the world, reserved within the thick churchyard wall as in another country.

Carefully she clipped the grass from the grave, and arranged the pinky-white, small chrysanthemums in the tin cross. When this was done, she took an empty jar from a neighbouring grave, brought water, and carefully, most scrupulously sponged the marble headstone and the coping-stone.

It gave her sincere satisfaction to do this. She felt in immediate contact with the world of her mother. She took minute pains, went through the park in a state bordering on pure happiness, as if in performing this task she came into a subtle, intimate connection with her mother. For the life she followed here in the world was far less real than the world of death she inherited from her mother.

The doctor's house was just by the church. Fergusson, being a mere hired assistant, was slave to the countryside. As he hurried now to attend to the outpatients in the surgery, glancing across the graveyard with his quick eye, he saw the girl at her task at the grave. She seemed so intent and remote, it was like looking into another world. Some mystical element was touched in him. He slowed down as he walked, watching her as if spellbound.

She lifted her eyes, feeling him looking. Their eyes met. And each looked again at once, each feeling, in some way, found out by the other. He lifted his cap and passed on down the road. There remained distinct in his consciousness, like a vision, the memory of her face, lifted from the tombstone in the churchyard, and looking at him with slow, large, portentous eyes. It *was* portentous, her face. It seemed to mesmerise him. There was a heavy power in her eyes which laid hold of his whole being, as if he had drunk some powerful drug. He had been feeling weak and done before. Now the life came back into him, he felt delivered from his own fretted, daily self.

He finished his duties at the surgery as quickly as might be, hastily filling up the bottles of the waiting people with cheap drugs. Then, in perpetual haste, he set off again to visit several cases in another part of his round, before tea-time. At all times he preferred to walk, if he could, but

particularly when he was not well. He fancied the motion restored him.

The afternoon was falling. It was grey, deadened, and wintry, with a slow, moist, heavy coldness sinking in and deadening all the faculties. But why should he think or notice? He hastily climbed the hill and turned across the dark-green fields, following the black cinder-track. In the distance, across a shallow dip in the country, the small town was clustered like smouldering ash, a tower, a spire, a heap of low, raw, extinct houses. And on the nearest fringe of the town, sloping into the dip, was Oldmeadow, the Pervins' house. He could see the stables and the outbuildings distinctly, as they lay towards him on the slope. Well, he would not go there many more times! Another resource would be lost to him, another place gone: the only company he cared for in the alien, ugly little town he was losing. Nothing but work, drudgery, constant hastening from dwelling to dwelling among the colliers and the ironworkers. It wore him out, but at the same time he had a craving for it. It was a stimulant to him to be in the homes of the working people, moving as it were through the innermost body of their life. His nerves were excited and gratified. He could come so near, into the very lives of the rough, inarticulate, powerfully emotional men and women. He grumbled, he said he hated the hellish hole. But as a matter of fact it excited him, the contact with the rough, strongly-feeling people was a stimulant applied direct to his nerves.

Below Oldmeadow, in the green, shallow, soddened hollow of fields, lay a square, deep pond. Roving across the landscape, the doctor's quick eye detected a figure in black passing through the gate of the field, down towards the pond. He looked again. It would be Mabel Pervin. His mind suddenly became alive and attentive.

Why was she going down there? He pulled up on the path on the slope above, and stood staring. He could just make sure of the small black figure moving in the hollow of the failing day. He seemed to see her in the midst of such obscurity, that he was like a clairvoyant, seeing rather with the mind's eye than with ordinary

sight. Yet he could see her positively enough, whilst he kept his eye attentive. He felt, if he looked away from her, in the thick, ugly falling dusk, he would lose her altogether.

He followed her minutely as she moved, direct and intent, like something transmitted rather than stirring in voluntary activity, straight down the field towards the pond. There she stood on the bank for a moment. She never raised her head. Then she waded slowly into the water.

He stood motionless as the small black figure walked slowly and deliberately towards the centre of the pond, very slowly, gradually moving deeper into the motionless water, and still moving forward as the water got up to her breast. Then he could see her no more in the dusk of the dead afternoon.

"There!" he exclaimed. "Would you believe it?"

And he hastened straight down, running over the wet, soddened fields, pushing through the hedges, down into the depression of callous wintry obscurity. It took him several minutes to come to the pond. He stood on the bank, breathing heavily. He could see nothing. His eyes seemed to penetrate the dead water. Yes, perhaps that was the dark shadow of her black clothing beneath the surface of the water.

He slowly ventured into the pond. The bottom was deep, soft clay, he sank in, and the water clasped dead cold round his legs. As he stirred he could smell the cold, rotten clay that fouled up into the water. It was objectionable in his lungs. Still, repelled and yet not heeding, he moved deeper into the pond. The cold water rose over his thighs, over his loins, upon his abdomen. The lower part of his body was all sunk in the hideous cold element. And the bottom was so deeply soft and uncertain, he was afraid of pitching with his mouth underneath. He could not swim, and was afraid.

He crouched a little, spreading his hands under the water and moving them round, trying to feel for her. The dead cold pond swayed upon his chest. He moved again, a little deeper, and again, with his hands under-

neath, he felt all around under the water. And he touched her clothing. But it evaded his fingers. He made a desperate effort to grasp it.

And so doing he lost his balance and went under, horribly, suffocating in the foul earthy water, struggling madly for a few moments. At last, after what seemed an eternity, he got his footing, rose again into the air and looked around. He gasped, and knew he was in the world. Then he looked at the water. She had risen near him. He grasped her clothing, and drawing her nearer, turned to take his way to land again.

He went very slowly, carefully, absorbed in the slow progress. He rose higher, climbing out of the pond. The water was now only about his legs; he was thankful, full of relief to be out of the clutches of the pond. He lifted her and staggered on to the bank, out of the horror of wet, grey clay.

He laid her down on the bank. She was quite unconscious and running with water. He made the water come from her mouth, he worked to restore her. He did not have to work very long before he could feel the breathing begin again in her; she was breathing naturally. He worked a little longer. He could feel her live beneath his hands; she was coming back. He wiped her face, wrapped her in his overcoat, looked round into the dim, dark-grey world, then lifted her and staggered down the bank and across the fields.

It seemed an unthinkably long way, and his burden so heavy he felt he would never get to the house. But at last he was in the stable-yard, and then in the house-yard. He opened the door and went into the house. In the kitchen he laid her down on the hearthrug, and called. The house was empty. But the fire was burning in the grate.

Then again he kneeled to attend to her. She was breathing regularly, her eyes were wide open and as if conscious, but there seemed something missing in her look. She was conscious in herself, but unconscious of her surroundings.

He ran upstairs, took blankets from a bed, and put

them before the fire to warm. Then he removed her saturated, earthy-smelling clothing, rubbed her dry with a towel, and wrapped her naked in the blankets. Then he went into the dining-room, to look for spirits. There was a little whiskey. He drank a gulp himself, and put some into her mouth.

The effect was instantaneous. She looked full into his face, as if she had been seeing him for some time, and yet had only just become conscious of him.

"Dr. Fergusson?" she said.

"What?" he answered.

He was divesting himself of his coat, intending to find some dry clothing upstairs. He could not bear the smell of the dead, clayey water, and he was mortally afraid for his own health.

"What did I do?" she asked.

"Walked into the pond," he replied. He had begun to shudder like one sick, and could hardly attend to her. Her eyes remained full on him, he seemed to be going dark in his mind, looking back at her helplessly. The shuddering became quieter in him, his life came back in him, dark and unknowing, but strong again.

"Was I out of my mind?" she asked, while her eyes were fixed on him all the time.

"Maybe, for the moment," he replied. He felt quiet, because his strength had come back. The strange fretful strain had left him.

"Am I out of my mind now?" she asked.

"Are you?" he reflected a moment. "No," he answered truthfully, "I don't see that you are." He turned his face aside. He was afraid, now, because he felt dazed, and felt dimly that her power was stronger than his, in this issue. And she continued to look at him fixedly all the time. "Can you tell me where I shall find some dry things to put on?" he asked.

"Did you dive into the pond for me?" she asked.

"No," he answered. "I walked in. But I went in overhead as well."

There was silence for a moment. He hesitated. He very much wanted to go upstairs to get into dry clothing.

But there was another desire in him. And she seemed to hold him. His will seemed to have gone to sleep, and left him, standing there slack before her. But he felt warm inside himself. He did not shudder at all, though his clothes were sodden on him.

"Why did you?" she asked.

"Because I didn't want you to do such a foolish thing," he said.

"It wasn't foolish," she said, still gazing at him as she lay on the floor, with a sofa cushion under her head. "It was the right thing to do. *I* knew best, then."

"I'll go and shift these wet things," he said. But still he had not the power to move out of her presence, until she sent him. It was as if she had the life of his body in her hands, and he could not extricate himself. Or perhaps he did not want to.

Suddenly she sat up. Then she became aware of her own immediate condition. She felt the blankets about her, she knew her own limbs. For a moment it seemed as if her reason were going. She looked round, with wild eye, as if seeking something. He stood still with fear. She saw her clothing lying scattered.

"Who undressed me?" she asked, her eyes resting full and inevitable on his face.

"I did," he replied, "to bring you round."

For some moments she sat and gazed at him awfully, her lips parted.

"Do you love me then?" she asked.

He only stood and stared at her, fascinated. His soul seemed to melt.

She shuffled forward on her knees, and put her arms round him, round his legs, as he stood there, pressing her breasts against his knees and thighs, clutching him with strange, convulsive certainty, pressing his thighs against her, drawing him to her face, her throat, as she looked up at him with flaring, humble eyes of transfiguration, triumphant in first possession.

"You love me," she murmured, in strange transport, yearning and triumphant and confident. "You love me. I know you love me, I know."

And she was passionately kissing his knees, through the wet clothing, passionately and indiscriminately kissing his knees, his legs, as if unaware of everything.

He looked down at the tangled wet hair, the wild, bare, animal shoulders. He was amazed, bewildered, and afraid. He had never thought of loving her. He had never wanted to love her. When he rescued her and restored her, he was a doctor, and she was a patient. He had had no single personal thought of her. Nay, this introduction of the personal element was very distasteful to him, a violation of his professional honour. It was horrible to have her there embracing his knees. It was horrible. He revolted from it, violently. And yet—and yet—he had not the power to break away.

She looked at him again, with the same supplication of powerful love, and that same transcendent, frightening light of triumph. In view of the delicate flame which seemed to come from her face like a light, he was powerless. And yet he had never intended to love her. He had never intended. And something stubborn in him could not give way.

"You love me," she repeated, in a murmur of deep, rhapsodic assurance. "You love me."

Her hands were drawing him, drawing him down to her. He was afraid, even a little horrified. For he had, really, no intention of loving her. Yet her hands were drawing him towards her. He put out his hand quickly to steady himself, and grasped her bare shoulder. A flame seemed to burn the hand that grasped her soft shoulder. He had no intention of loving her: his whole will was against his yielding. It was horrible— And yet wonderful was the touch of her shoulder, beautiful the shining of her face. Was she perhaps mad? He had a horror of yielding to her. Yet something in him ached also.

He had been staring away at the door, away from her. But his hand remained on her shoulder. She had gone suddenly very still. He looked down at her. Her eyes were now wide with fear, with doubt, the light was dying from her face, a shadow of terrible greyness was return-

ing. He could not bear the touch of her eyes' question upon him, and the look of death behind the question.

With an inward groan he gave way, and let his heart yield towards her. A sudden gentle smile came on his face. And her eyes, which never left his face, slowly, slowly filled with tears. He watched the strange water rise in her eyes, like some slow fountain coming up. And his heart seemed to burn and melt away in his breast.

He could not bear to look at her any more. He dropped on his knees and caught her head with his arms and pressed her face against his throat. She was very still. His heart, which seemed to have broken, was burning with a kind of agony in his breast. And he felt her slow, hot tears wetting his throat. But he could not move.

He felt the hot tears wet his neck and the hollows of his neck, and he remained motionless, suspended through one of man's eternities. Only now it had become indispensable to him to have her face pressed close to him; he could never let her go again. He could never let her head go away from the close clutch of his arm. He wanted to remain like that for ever, with his heart hurting him in a pain that was also life to him. Without knowing, he was looking down on her damp, soft brown hair.

Then, as it were suddenly, he smelt the horrid stagnant smell of that water. And at the same moment she drew away from him and looked at him. Her eyes were wistful and unfathomable. He was afraid of them, and he fell to kissing her, not knowing what he was doing. He wanted her eyes not to have that terrible, wistful, unfathomable look.

When she turned her face to him again, a faint delicate flush was glowing, and there was again dawning that terrible shining of joy in her eyes, which really terrified him, and yet which he now wanted to see, because he feared the look of doubt still more.

"You love me?" she said, rather faltering.

"Yes." The word cost him a painful effort. Not because it wasn't true. But because it was too newly true, the *saying* seemed to tear open again his newly-torn heart. And he hardly wanted it to be true, even now.

She lifted her face to him, and he bent forward and kissed her on the mouth, gently, with the one kiss that is an eternal pledge. And as he kissed her his heart strained again in his breast. He never intended to love her. But now it was over. He had crossed over the gulf to her, and all that he had left behind had shrivelled and become void.

After the kiss, her eyes again slowly filled with tears. She sat still, away from him, with her face drooped aside, and her hands folded in her lap. The tears fell very slowly. There was complete silence. He too sat there motionless and silent on the hearthrug. The strange pain of his heart that was broken seemed to consume him. That he should love her? That this was love! That he should be ripped open in this way!—Him, a doctor!—How they would all jeer if they knew!—It was agony to him to think they might know.

In the curious naked pain of the thought he looked again to her. She was sitting there drooped into a muse. He saw a tear fall, and his heart flared hot. He saw for the first time that one of her shoulders was quite uncovered, one arm bare, he could see one of her small breasts; dimly, because it had become almost dark in the room.

"Why are you crying?" he asked, in an altered voice.

She looked up at him, and behind her tears the consciousness of her situation for the first time brought a dark look of shame to her eyes.

"I'm not crying, really," she said, watching him half frightened.

He reached his hand, and softly closed it on her bare arm.

"I love you! I love you!" he said in a soft, low, vibrating voice, unlike himself.

She shrank, and dropped her head. The soft, penetrating grip of his hand on her arm distressed her. She looked up at him.

"I want to go," she said. "I want to go and get you some dry things."

"Why?" he said. "I'm all right."

"But I want to go," she said. "And I want you to change your things."

He released her arm, and she wrapped herself in the blanket, looking at him rather frightened. And still she did not rise.

"Kiss me," she said wistfully.

He kissed her, but briefly, half in anger.

Then, after a second, she rose nervously, all mixed up in the blanket. He watched her in her confusion, as she tried to extricate herself and wrap herself up so that she could walk. He watched her relentlessly, as she knew. And as she went, the blanket trailing, and as he saw a glimpse of her feet and her white leg, he tried to remember her as she was when he had wrapped her in the blanket. But then he didn't want to remember, because she had been nothing to him then, and his nature revolted from remembering her as she was when she was nothing to him.

A tumbling, muffled noise from within the dark house startled him. Then he heard her voice: "There are clothes." He rose and went to the foot of the stairs, and gathered up the garments she had thrown down. Then he came back to the fire, to rub himself down and dress. He grinned at his own appearance, when he had finished.

The fire was sinking, so he put on coal. The house was now quite dark, save for the light of a street-lamp that shone in faintly from beyond the holly trees. He lit the gas with matches he found on the mantel-piece. Then he emptied the pockets of his own clothes, and threw all his wet things in a heap into the scullery. After which he gathered up her sodden clothes, gently, and put them in a separate heap on the copper-top in the scullery.

It was six o'clock on the clock. His own watch had stopped. He ought to go back to the surgery. He waited, and still she did not come down. So he went to the foot of the stairs and called:

"I shall have to go."

Almost immediately he heard her coming down. She had on her best dress of black voile, and her hair was tidy, but still damp. She looked at him—and in spite of herself, smiled.

"I don't look like you in those clothes," she said.

"Do I look a sight?" he answered.

They were shy of one another.

"I'll make you some tea," she said.

"No, I must go."

"Must you?" And she looked at him again with the wide, strained, doubtful eyes. And again, from the pain of his breast, he knew how he loved her. He went and bent to kiss her, gently, passionately, with his heart's painful kiss.

"And my hair smells so horrible," she murmured in distraction. "And I'm so awful, I'm so awful! Oh, no, I'm too awful." And she broke into bitter, heartbroken sobbing. "You can't want to love me, I'm horrible."

"Don't be silly, don't be silly," he said, trying to comfort her, kissing her, holding her in his arms. "I want you, I want to marry you, we're going to be married, quickly, quickly—to-morrow if I can."

But she only sobbed terribly, and cried:

"I feel awful. I feel awful. I feel I'm horrible to you."

"No, I want you, I want you," was all he answered, blindly, with that terrible intonation which frightened her almost more than her horror lest he should *not* want her.

# THE FLY[1]

By KATHERINE MANSFIELD

(From *The Century Magazine*)

"Y'ARE very snug in here," piped old Mr. Woodifield, and he peered out of the great green leather arm-chair by the desk of his friend, the boss, as a baby peers out of its pram. His talk was over; it was time for him to be off. But he did not want to go. Since he had retired, after his stroke, the wife and the girls kept him boxed up in the house every day of the week except Tuesday. On Tuesdays he was dressed and brushed and allowed to cut back to the City for the day, though what he did there the wife and the girls couldn't imagine. Made a nuisance of himself to his friends, they supposed.

Well, perhaps so. All the same we cling to our last pleasures as the tree clings to its last leaves. So there sat old Woodifield, smoking a cigar and staring almost greedily at the boss, who rolled in his office chair, stout, rosy, five years older than he, and still going strong, still at the helm. It did one good to see him. Wistfully, admiringly, the old voice added:

"It's snug in here, upon my word!"

"Yes, it's comfortable enough," agreed the boss, and he flipped *The Financial Times* with a paper-knife. As a matter of fact, he was proud of his room; he liked to have it admired, especially by old Woodifield. It gave him a feeling of deep, solid satisfaction to be planted there in the midst of it in full view of that frail old figure in the muffler.

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"I've had it done up lately," he explained, as he had explained for the last—how many?—weeks. "New carpet," and he pointed to the bright red carpet, with a pattern of large white rings. "New furniture," and he nodded toward the massive book-case, and the table with legs like twisted treacle. "Electric heating." He waved almost exultantly toward the five transparent, pearly sausages glowing softly in the tilted copper pan.

But he did not draw old Woodifield's attention to the photograph over the table of a grave-looking boy in uniform standing in one of those spectral photographers' parks, with photographers' storm-clouds behind him. It was not new. It had been there for over six years.

"There was something I wanted to tell you," said old Woodifield, and his eyes grew dim in trying to remember. "Now, what was it? I had it in my mind when I started out this morning." His hands began to tremble, and patches of red showed above his beard.

"Poor old chap! He's on his last pins," thought the boss. And feeling kindly, he winked at the old man and said jokingly: "I tell you what. I've got a little drop of something here that'll do you good before you go out into the cold again. It's beautiful stuff; it wouldn't hurt a child." He took a key off his watch-chain, unlocked a cupboard below his desk, and drew forth a dark, squat bottle. "That's the medicine," said he, "and the man from whom I got it told me on the strict Q. T. it came from the cellars at Windsor Castle."

Old Woodifield's mouth fell open at the sight. He couldn't have looked more surprised if the boss had produced a rabbit.

"It's whisky, ain't it?" he piped feebly.

The boss turned the bottle and lovingly showed him the label. Whisky it was.

"D'you know," said he, peering up at the boss, wonderingly, "they won't let me touch it at home." He looked as though he was going to cry.

"Ah, that's where we know a bit more than the ladies," cried the boss, swooping across for two tumblers that stood on the table with the water-bottle, and pouring a generous

finger into each. "Drink it down. It'll do you good. And don't put any water with it. It's sacrilege to tamper with stuff like this. Ah!" he tossed off his, pulled out his handkerchief, hastily wiped his mustaches, and cocked an eye at old Woodifield, who was rolling his in his chaps.

The old man swallowed, was silent a moment, and then said faintly:

"It's nutty!"

But it warmed him; it crept into his chill old brain: he remembered.

"That was it," he said, heaving himself out of his chair. "I thought you'd like to know. The girls were in Belgium last week having a look at poor Reggie's grave, and they happened to come across your boy's. They are quite near each other, it seems."

Old Woodifield paused, but the boss made no reply. Only a quiver in his eyelids showed that he heard.

"The girls were delighted with the way the place is kept," piped the old voice. "Beautifully looked after. Couldn't be better if they were at home. You've not been across, have yer?"

"No! no!" For various reasons the boss had not been across.

"There's miles of it," quavered old Woodifield, "and it's all as neat as a garden. Flowers growing on all the graves. Nice, broad paths." It was plain from his voice how much he liked a nice, broad path.

The pause came again. Then the old man brightened wonderfully.

"D'you know what the hotel made the girls pay for a pot of jam?" he piped. "Ten francs! Robbery, I call it. It was a little pot, so Gertrude says, no bigger than a half-crown. And she hadn't taken more than a spoonful when they charged her ten francs. Gertrude brought the pot away with her to teach 'em a lesson. Quite right, too; it's trading on our feelings. They think because we're over there having a look round, we're ready to pay anything. That's what it is." He turned toward the door.

"Quite right, quite right," cried the boss, though what was quite right he hadn't the least idea. He came round

by his desk, followed the shuffling footsteps to the door, and saw the old fellow out. Woodifield was gone.

For a long moment the boss stayed, staring at nothing, while the gray-haired office messenger, watching him, dodged in and out of his cubbyhole like a dog that expects to be taken for a run.

"I'll see nobody for half an hour, Macey," then said the boss. "Understand? Nobody at all."

"Very good, sir," said the messenger.

The door shut, the firm, heavy steps recrossed the bright carpet, the fat body plumped down in the spring chair, and leaning forward, the boss covered his face with his hands. He wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep.

It had been a terrible shock to him when old Woodifield sprang that remark upon him about the boy's grave. It was exactly as though the earth had opened and he had seen the boy lying there, with Woodifield's girls staring down at him. For it was strange. Although over six years had passed away, the boss never thought of the boy except as lying unchanged, unblemished in his uniform, asleep forever. "My son!" groaned the boss; but no tears came yet. In the past, in the first months and even years after the boy's death, he had only to say those words to be overcome by such grief that nothing short of a violent fit of weeping could relieve him. Time, he had declared then, he had told everybody, could make no difference. Other men, perhaps, might recover, might live their loss down, but not he. How was it possible? His boy was an only son. Ever since his birth the boss had worked at building up this business for him; it had no other meaning if it was not for the boy. Life itself had come to have no other meaning. How on earth could he have slaved, denied himself, kept going all those years without the promise forever before him of the boy's stepping into his shoes and carrying on where he left off?

And that promise had been so near being fulfilled! The boy had been in the office learning the ropes for a year before the war. Every morning they had started off together, they had come back by the same train. And what congratulations he had received as the boy's father!

No wonder; he had taken to it marvelously. As to his popularity with the staff, every man jack of them down to old Macey couldn't make enough of the boy. And he wasn't in the least spoiled. No, he was just his bright natural self, with the right word for everybody, with that boyish look and his habit of saying, "Simply splendid."

But all that was over and done with as though it never had been. The day had come when Macey had handed him the telegram that brought the whole place crashing about his head: "Deeply regret to inform you—" And he had left the office a broken man, with his life in ruins.

Six years ago! six years! How quickly time passed! It might have happened yesterday. The boss took his hands from his face; he was puzzled. Something seemed to be wrong with him. He wasn't feeling as he wanted to feel. He decided to get up and have a look at the boy's photograph. But it wasn't a favorite photograph of his; the expression was unnatural. It was cold, even stern-looking. The boy never looked like that.

At that moment the boss noticed that a fly had fallen into his broad ink-pot, and was trying feebly, but desperately, to clamber out again. "Help! help!" said those struggling legs. But the sides of the ink-pot were wet and slippery; the fly fell back and began to swim. The boss took up a pen, picked the fly out of the ink, and shook it onto a piece of blotting-paper. For a fraction of a second it lay still on the dark patch that oozed round it; then the front legs waved, took hold, and pulling its small sodden body up, it began the immense task of cleaning the ink from its wings. Over and under, over and under, went a leg along a wing, as the stone goes over and under the scythe. Then there was a pause, while the fly, seeming to stand on the tips of its toes, tried to expand first one wing and then the other. It succeeded at last, and sitting down, it began like a minute cat to clean its face. Now one could imagine that the little front legs rubbed against each other lightly, joyfully. The horrible danger was over; it had escaped; it was ready for life again.

But just then the boss had an idea. He plunged his pen back into the ink, leaned his thick wrist on the blotting-

paper, and as the fly tried its wings, down came a great heavy blot. What would it make of that? What indeed! The little beggar seemed absolutely cowed, stunned, and afraid to move because of what would happen next. But then, as if painfully, it dragged itself forward. The front legs waved, caught hold, and, more slowly this time, the task began from the beginning.

"He's a plucky little devil," thought the boss, and he felt a real admiration for the fly's courage. That was the way to tackle things, that was the right spirit. Never say die; it was only a question of— But the fly had again finished its laborious task, and the boss had just time to refill his pen to shake fair and square on the new-cleaned body yet another dark drop. What about it this time? A painful moment of suspense followed. But, behold! the front legs were again waving. The boss felt a rush of relief. He leaned over the fly and said to it tenderly: "You artful little—" And he actually had the brilliant notion of breathing on it to help the drying process. All the same, there was something timid and weak about its efforts now, and the boss decided that this time should be the last as he dipped the pen deep into the ink-pot.

It was. The last blot fell on the soaked blotting-paper, and the draggled fly lay in it and did not stir. The back legs were stuck to the body; the front legs were not to be seen.

"Come on!" said the boss. "Look sharp!" And he stirred it with his pen; in vain. Nothing happened or was likely to happen: the fly was dead.

The boss lifted the corpse on the end of the paper-knife and flung it into the waste-paper basket, but such a grinding feeling of wretchedness seized him that he felt positively frightened. He started forward and pressed the bell for Macey.

"Bring me sóme fresh blotting-paper," he said sternly, "and look sharp about it." And while the old dog padded away, the boss fell to wondering what it was he had been thinking about before. What was it? It was— He took out his handkerchief and passed it inside his collar. For the life of him he could not remember.

# THE TAIPAN[1]

By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

(From *Pearson's Magazine*, London)

NO one knew better than he that he was an important person. He was number one in not the least important branch of the most important English firm in China. He had worked his way up through solid ability, and he looked back with a faint smile at the callow clerk who had come out to China thirty years before.

When he remembered the modest home he had come from, a little red house in a long row of little red houses in Barnes, a suburb which, aiming desperately at the genteel, achieves only a sordid melancholy, and compared it with the magnificent stone mansion, with its wide verandas and spacious rooms, which was at once the office of the company and his own residence, he chuckled with satisfaction.

He had come a long way since then. He thought of the high tea to which he had sat down when he came home from school (he was at St. Paul's), with his father and mother and his two sisters—a slice of cold meat, a great deal of bread and butter, and plenty of milk in his tea—everybody helping himself; and then he thought of the state in which now he ate his evening meal.

He always dressed and, whether he was alone or not, he expected the three boys to wait at table. His number one boy knew exactly what he liked, and he never had to bother himself with the details of house-keeping; but he always had a set dinner with soup and fish, entrée, roast, sweet and savoury, so that if he wanted to ask anyone in at the

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last moment he could. He liked his food and he did not see why when he was alone he should have a less good dinner than when he had a guest.

He had indeed gone far. That was why he did not care to go home now. He had not been to England for ten years, and he took his leave in Japan or Vancouver where he was sure of meeting old friends from the China coast. He knew no one at home. His sisters had married in their own station, their husbands were clerks and their sons were clerks; there was nothing between him and them; they bored him. He satisfied the claims of relationship by sending them every Christmas a piece of fine silk, some elaborate embroidery, or a case of tea.

He was not a mean man, and as long as his mother lived he had made her an allowance; but when the time came for him to retire he had no intention of going back to England; he had seen too many men do that and he knew how often it was a failure. He meant to take a house near the racecourse in Shanghai: what with bridge and his ponies and golf he expected to get through the rest of his life very comfortably. But he had a good many years before he need think of retiring. One of these days Higgins would be going home, and then he would take charge of the head office in Shanghai.

Meanwhile, he was very happy where he was; he could save money, which you couldn't do in Shanghai, and have a good time into the bargain. This place had another advantage over Shanghai: he was the most prominent man in the community and what he said went. Even the consul took care to keep on the right side of him. Once a consul and he had been at loggerheads and it was not he who had gone to the wall. The Taipan thrust out his jaw pugnaciously as he thought of the incident.

But he smiled, for he felt in an excellent humour. He was walking back to his office from a capital luncheon at the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Bank. They did you very well there. The food was first rate and there was plenty of liquor. He had started with a couple of cocktails, then he had some excellent sauterne, and he had finished up with two glasses of port and some fine old brandy.

He felt good. And when he left he did a thing that was rare with him; he walked. His bearers with his chair kept a few paces behind him in case he felt inclined to slip into it, but he enjoyed stretching his legs. He did not get enough exercise. Now that he was too heavy to ride it was difficult to get exercise; but if he was too heavy to ride he could still keep ponies, and as he strolled along in the balmy air he thought of the spring meeting.

He had a couple of griffins that he had hopes of, and one of the lads in his office had turned out a fine jockey (he must see they didn't sneak him away—old Higgins in Shanghai would give a pot of money to get him over there) and he ought to pull off two or three races. He flattered himself that he had the finest stable in the city. He pouted his broad chest like a pigeon. It was a beautiful day and it was good to be alive.

He paused as he came to the cemetery. It stood there, neat and orderly, as an evident sign of the community's opulence. He never passed the cemetery without a little glow of pride. He was pleased to be an Englishman. For the cemetery stood in a place, valueless when it was chosen, which with the increase of the city's affluence was now worth a great deal of money. It had been suggested that the graves should be moved to another spot and the land sold for building, but the feeling of the community was against it.

It gave the Taipan a sense of satisfaction to think that their dead rested on the most valuable site on the island. It showed that there were things they cared for more than money. Money be blowed! When it came to "the things that mattered" (this was a favourite phrase with the Taipan), well, one remembered that money wasn't everything.

And now he thought he would take a stroll through. He looked at the graves. They were neatly kept and the pathways were free from weeds. There was a look of prosperity. And as he sauntered along he read the names on the tombstones. Here were three together—the captain, the first mate and the second mate of the barque *Mary Baxter,* who had all perished together in the typhoon of 1908. He remembered it well.

There was a little group of two missionaries, their wives and children, who had been massacred during the Boxer troubles. Shocking thing that had been. Not that he took much stock in missionaries; but, hang it all! one couldn't have these Chinese massacring them.

Then he came to a cross with a name on it he knew. Good chap, Edward Mulock, but he couldn't stand his liquor, drank himself to death, poor devil—twenty-five; the Taipan had known a lot of them do that. There were several more neat crosses with a man's name on them and the age, twenty-five, twenty-six, or twenty-seven.

It was always the same story; they had come out to China; they had never seen so much money before, they were good fellows and they wanted to drink with the rest; they couldn't stand it, and there they were in the cemetery. You had to have a strong head and a fine constitution to drink drink-for-drink on the China Coast.

Of course it was very sad, but the Taipan could hardly help a smile when he thought how many of these young fellows he had drunk underground. And there was a death that had been useful, a fellow in his own firm, senior to him and a clever chap too; if that fellow had lived he might not have been Taipan now. Truly the ways of fate were inscrutable.

Ah, and here was little Mrs. Turner—Violet Turner—she had been a pretty little thing; he had had quite an affair with her; he had been devilish cut up when she died. He looked at her age on the tombstone. She'd be no chicken if she were alive now.

And as he thought of all those dead people a sense of satisfaction spread through him. He had beaten them all. They were dead and he was alive and, by George, he'd scored them off! His eyes collected in one picture all those crowded graves and he smiled scornfully. He very nearly rubbed his hands.

"No one ever thought I was a fool," he muttered.

He had a feeling of good-natured contempt for those gibbering dead. Then, as he strolled along, he came suddenly upon two coolies digging a grave. He was astonished, for he had not heard that anyone in the community was dead.

"Who the devil's that for?" he said aloud.

The coolies did not even look at him; they went on with their work, standing in the grave, deep down, and they shovelled up heavy clods of earth.

Though he had been so long in China he knew no Chinese; in his day it was not thought necessary to learn the beastly language, and he asked the coolies in English whose grave they were digging. They did not understand. They answered him in Chinese, and he cursed them for ignorant fools.

He knew that Mrs. Broome's child was ailing and it might have died, but he would certainly have heard of it, and, besides, that wasn't a child's grave, it was a man's, and a big man's too. It was uncanny. He wished he hadn't gone into the cemetery; he hurried out and stepped into his chair. His good humour had all gone and there was an uneasy frown on his face. The moment he got back to his office he called to his number two:

"I say, Peters, who's dead, d'you know?"

But Peters knew nothing. The Taipan was puzzled. He called one of the native clerks and sent him to the cemetery to ask the coolies. He began to sign his letters. The clerk came back and said the coolies had gone and there was no one to ask.

The Taipan began to feel vaguely annoyed: he did not like things to happen of which he knew nothing. His own boy would know; his boy always knew everything, and he sent for him; but the boy had heard of no death in the community.

"I knew no one was dead," said the Taipan irritably. "But what's the grave for?"

He told the boy to go to the overseer of the cemetery and find out what the devil he had dug a grave for when no one was dead.

"Let me have a whisky and soda before you go," he added, as the boy was leaving the room.

He did not know why the sight of the grave had made him uncomfortable. But he tried to put it out of his mind. He felt better when he had drunk the whisky, and finished his work. He went upstairs and turned over the pages of

*Punch.* In a few minutes he would go to the club and play a rubber or two of bridge before dinner. But it would ease his mind to hear what his boy had to say, and he waited for his return. In a little while the boy came back and he brought with him the overseer.

"What are you having a grave dug for?" he asked the overseer point blank. "Nobody's dead."

"I no dig glave," said the man.

"What the devil do you mean by that? There were two coolies digging a grave this afternoon."

The two Chinese looked at one another. Then the boy said they had been to the cemetery together. There was no new grave there.

The Taipan only just stopped himself from speaking.

"But, hang it all, I saw it myself!" were the words on the tip of his tongue.

But he did not say them. He grew very red as he choked them down. The two Chinese looked at him with their steady eyes. For a moment his breath failed him.

"All right. Get out," he gasped.

But as soon as they were gone he shouted for the boy again, and when he came, maddeningly impassive, he told him to bring some whisky. He rubbed his sweating face with a handkerchief. His hand trembled when he lifted the glass to his lips. They could say what they liked, but he had seen the grave. Why, he could hear still the dull thud as the coolies threw the spadefuls of earth on the ground above them.

What did it mean? He could feel his heart beating. He felt strangely ill at ease. But he pulled himself together. It was all nonsense. If there was no grave there it must have been a hallucination. The best thing he could do was to go to the club, and if he ran across the doctor he would ask him to give him a look over.

Everyone in the club looked just the same as ever. He did not know why he should have expected them to look different. It was a comfort.

These men, living for many years with one another lives that were methodically regulated, had acquired a number of little idiosyncrasies—one of them hummed incessantly while

he played bridge, another insisted on drinking beer through a straw—and these tricks which had so often irritated the Taipan now gave him a sense of security. He needed it, for he could not get out of his head that strange sight he had seen; he played bridge very badly; his partner was censorious, and the Taipan lost his temper.

Suddenly he felt he could not bear to stay in the club any longer. As he went out he saw the doctor reading the *Times* in the reading room, but he could not bring himself to speak to him. He wanted to see for himself whether that grave was really there, and stepping into his chair he told his bearers to take him to the cemetery. You couldn't have a hallucination twice, could you? And besides, he would take the overseer in with him, and if the grave was not there he wouldn't see it, and if it was he'd give the overseer the soundest thrashing he'd ever had.

But the overseer was nowhere to be found. He had gone out and taken the keys with him. When the Taipan found he could not get into the cemetery he felt suddenly exhausted. He got back into his chair and told his bearers to take him home. He would lie down for half an hour before dinner. He was tired out.

He ordered a bottle of champagne with his dinner, and that made him feel more comfortable. Afterwards he told the boy to bring him the best brandy. When he had drunk a couple of glasses of this he felt himself again. Hallucinations be damned! He went to the billiard-room and practised a few difficult shots. There could not be much the matter with him when his eye was so sure. When he went to bed he sank immediately into a sound sleep.

But suddenly he awoke. He had dreamt of that open grave and the coolies digging leisurely. He was sure he had seen them. Then he heard the rattle of the night watchman going his rounds. It broke upon the stillness of the night so harshly that it made him jump out of his skin. And then terror seized him. He felt a horror of the winding, multitudinous streets of the Chinese city.

He loathed the smells that assaulted his nostrils. And the people. They seemed to press upon him with menace. He hated the country. China! Why had he ever come? He

was panic-stricken now. He must get out. He would not stay another year, another month. What did he care about Shanghai?

"Oh, my God!" he cried, "if I were only safely back in England."

He wanted to go home. If he had to die, he wanted to die in England. He could not bear to be buried among all these yellow men. He wanted to be buried at home, not in the grave he had seen that day. He could never rest there. Never.

He got out of bed and wrote to the head of the firm and said he had discovered that he was dangerously ill. He must be replaced. He could not stay longer than was absolutely necessary. He must go home at once.

They found the letter in the morning clenched in the Taipan's hand. He had slipped down between the desk and the chair. He was stone dead.

# STRIPES[1]

## By ETHEL COLBURN MAYNE

(From *The Golden Hind*)

THE little hat-box would be big enough, since clothes intended for a jumble-sale need not be packed with care. And they could have the hat-box, too. The last time Bell had taken it upon a visit with her, both the straps had broken, worn with age; and when the chauffeur took it down, he only just had saved the whole thing from upsetting on the door-step. For the key was lost, of course; Bell never could keep keys. She'd have to buy a new box; her old friend must go. How many hats, how many Bells, that box had known! Someone would buy it for a song and have it made as good as new. At jumble-sales they bought your mendable unmended things, and salved your conscience for you.

In the heaps that strewed the floor and bed, there lay a dozen left-off Bells. Bell smiled at her old selves; and now from out the wardrobe came a blouse in blue and white striped muslin. As she drew it from the hanger, Bell stopped smiling. But she did not stop her humming of a song—the "Linden-Tree" of Schubert. Bell went on with that; she knew that she went on with it.

The blouse had been a favourite, yet she had worn it very little. It had broad blue stripes, black-edged—narrow black lines which made the blue-and-white peculiarly becoming; and a tiny collar of black satin lay upon one's neck below the nape, not coming round at all. Half-blouse, half-jumper—very clever; always at that "salon" Bell could find the sort of things she liked.

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She had forgotten . . . well, at any rate that it was *here*. And now that it was in her hands Bell's eyes shut quickly, first against the blouse, and then against the day when last she wore it.

She should never have put on that blouse with a striped skirt. But the right skirt had shed a fastener. She had meant to find one after lunch and sew it on and change. Then something came by lunch-time post which needed answering at once; she had delayed to change, and sat down in the drawing-room to write her letter.

Hair a little tumbled too; and hands—poor London hands! Only the time since breakfast; but one's knuckles look so knotty when they're even slightly soiled. Who would have come at such an hour? Not anyone but he, and he had never come at such an hour before.

To meet the blow like that was bitter luck. The rest was more than luck; if you were feeling grandiose you'd call it fate. But to be caught untidy had been just bad luck. How often, since, Bell had imagined having had her yellow muslin frock on, and her hair and hands all right! It wouldn't have changed anything—except perhaps the way she had gone under. Hopeless. There wasn't anything to do, nor anything that signified to say; yet in her yellow frock she might have. . . .

*I have something very difficult to say to you.* Oh, Bell, sit up and face it. But how can I, with my hair and hands like this, and two striped garments on that don't belong? *I'm going to be married very soon.* And in the yellow muslin frock she clasped two slim bright hands upon her lap and lifted up a smooth bright head and faced it splendidly. But in the two striped things, with knotty-knuckled hands . . .. Nowhere to look but in her lap, or in his face. . . . The little blouse was crisp and fresh. It had been then; no good, with all the rest; but it had been, and it was now. For Bell had stretched it on this very hanger when she took it off that evening. When it had fallen from her, some of the shame had seemed to fall away with it. Never again!—yet she had put it by as carefully as if she ever could. Not crushed, the little blouse? Bell's eyes were open now. No, little blouse; not you.

Was it too good to put into a jumble-sale? Would Nancy take it? Nancy didn't "know"; but if she did, she wouldn't like to wear the vesture of one's pain. Unfair to let one's sister do a thing she would abhor to do. Well, anyhow, this should be packed with care—a separate cardboard box.

Bell hummed the Schubert song while she filled out the sleeves with tissue paper. Thoughts were fluttering about her like the moths that were not there because of the red tablet thing she used instead of napthalin (no smell). Pale tiny moths—you had to crush them when they *were* there; nothing could excuse you if you didn't, they were so destructive. Such a little, little pinch of dust! Thoughts could be crushed like that; and it had been while someone sang "The Linden-Tree" in the warm, smoky concert-hall that they had turned and looked in one another's eyes, and known that they were lovers. For a long while Bell had feared that song; then one day she had heard it without warning. Something fluttered up in her; she could not crush it then. But since, the wistful cadences . . . She taught herself to hum them absently when they occurred to her. You had to crush the fluttering pale moths—a little pinch of dust.

Well packed! Some pretty girl would covet it. There'd be a rush for anything so good and so immaculate. A blouse like that for, say, three shillings! Helping at the Sale, one might contrive to keep it for a pretty girl, and wish her better luck with it.

* * * *

The women surged into the hall. Few pretty girls, but many girls. Dowdy or showy; sometimes, inexplicably, both. And eager; hostile, but eager, knowing all about the "styles"; scorning the hats especially. The hats *were* awful. Everyone sent such wrecks.

The girls had eagle-eyes, and no illusions. They restrained their meeker mothers. "That thing! Why, it's filthy. Look—you'd never get it clean."

Gladys might giggle, but Irene took it hard. "This fur?

I'd rather wear a tom-cat round my neck. He'd smell no worse!" Her young eyes blasted all the women selling. Yes, she had to *come*—there might be something she could do with; but she never would forgive these women.

Bell was afraid to speak to her, or any of the girls. She would have felt as they felt; she would have known as they knew that the sellers wore their oldest clothes on purpose. Timidly she met their eyes; when they passed on disdainfully, she felt relieved. The pretty girl had not appeared. Perhaps she never would; and Bell decided that the blouse must be displayed. She had been hiding it for the imagined blue-eyed, black-lashed girl who was to have that better luck with it.

Just as she set it forth, she saw before her stall—not the Imagined, but a girl who differed from the rest in that, besides her mother, a young man was with her. Not one other man was there, and this man wished *he* wasn't, very evidently. He was dark and short, yet graceful—fiery and lithe in movement. Brown eyes, quick and clear, took in the scene; a small close mouth twitched angrily. Bell, watching him, reflected (as she often had before) that men like him were in a way more interesting than the men she knew, because they had to "do it all themselves" —to make their characters without much help from anybody else. No training, no tradition; only their own intelligence and impulse. This one looked like a salesman in the silk department of some first-rate shop. Buying from him, you'd notice him; and he would be aware that you had noticed him. A sort of half-confessed relation would spring up. But then the jargon of his calling which, no matter how intelligent, he had to speak, would put you off; you'd feel annoyed at having let him see that he had interested you. Girls of his own sort, though, would not be put off by the jargon. All would be right for them, and he would have no end of other things to say, outside the shop.

Observing this man's girl, Bell thought: "She's very much in love with him, and she's afraid. He's cross with her sometimes; he's clever and ill-tempered. She can be easily upset and 'shocked.' She doesn't like to be so much

in love—she never thought she would be, and it vexes her."

The girl was almost pretty. Everything was passable except her nose. Her nose was sharp and pink. "Powder," thought Bell. "Why *doesn't* she wear powder!" But this girl disdained it, one could guess. For she was priggish-looking—very slim and still; pale with that little glittering pink nose between the low-set cheeks: blue-eyed, fair-haired, fair-lashed. "Fair lashes can be fetching, but hers aren't." Though a full rosy mouth put up a fight against the rest, it seldom won. "Y.W.C.A., and he is not Y.M., I'm sure!"

He took her coolly, but he liked her "style"; and in her priggish way, she *had* a style. Clad in a long dark coat, well buttoned-up, and with a buttoned, untrimmed collar to her chin, she tacitly reproved the open-necked Irene and the feather-boaed Gladys. On her fair head sat a dark-blue toque with ribbon-trimming only. Fabric gloves of London grey, and sober shoes of blacking-leather (with black stockings of no kind of "silk" at all) completed an effect, which clearly was intentional, of no attempt at any grandeurs since she could not have the real thing.

Incorruptible—and yet one saw at moments the kept-under Eve to whom the rosy mouth belonged. Before Bell set the muslin blouse beneath her eyes, she had been tempted once or twice. A black-and-white check pleated skirt, a short black coat that went with it; on these she paused.

"That style would suit me."

But the young man frowned, and she abandoned them.

Her mother whispered: "Flo *does* fancy checks."

She was so different from Flo that one could "see" the father—who was dead, for she wore widow's weeds. From him the girl derived, all but the rosy mouth whose ruins one could trace upon the mother's soft red countenance. Her flabby jollity had had its tussle with the husband and the daughter, but survived. She feared and worshipped Flo; Flo's man she feared, without the worship. He disliked her openly. Bell saw his mouth contract when he was told that Flo did fancy checks. That settled it!

He wasn't going to be bidden by a mother-in-law; he would put down his foot at once.

"Well, dear, when Victor's making you a birthday present," said the mother, whispering again, "*I* say you should consult his taste."

Flo bit her lip. "Mother! We don't want everyone to know." And Bell was everyone, most miserably. But she took her courage in both hands, and in both hands held out the blouse.

"I think you'd wear this well."

She felt the phrase was gratifying. What they said in first-rate houses, Flo divined. Her blue eyes, holding still a gleam of anger at her mother's clumsiness, examined the blue blouse.

"It's pretty," she said slowly.

"And as fresh as paint!" the mother cried.

Flo took the blouse from Bell. "I don't see anything to hold the waist—how does a person keep it tidy? I suppose that's why—"

But Bell broke in. "There isn't anything; there never was. It comes outside the skirt."

"It's not a jumper," said the girl, suspiciously. But Victor knew.

"Oh, that's all right. We've had that style."

"You wear it loose," Bell eagerly explained. "And it hangs over charmingly in front—a straight, short line."

"Flo, try it on! You could slip off your coat," the mother urged. "It wouldn't hurt the blouse," she said to Bell. "Of course it won't," said Bell. "Do try it on."

But Victor frowned again. "The sloppy styles don't suit you."

"That's all *you* know!" the girl returned, with her first smile. "You've never seen me sloppy, as you call it." For the rosy mouth was winning this time; Flo was captivated by the blouse.

She took her coat off. What was beneath had not been visible till then. A plain white blouse of cotton crepe, and a striped skirt.

Bell flushed as if with sudden pain. Remembered pain;

and a new pain as well—a queer solicitude. . . . Play Providence; stop Flo from letting Victor buy the blouse for her! What does it signify to me? But Flo's thin face with its young, fixed austerity that yet was capable, Bell thought, of dwindling into wistfulness—Flo's face appealed to Bell. Flo would fight life as hard as life fought her; but how she would have liked to be the sort that needn't fight, at any rate, a little rosy mouth! She, like her man, had made herself a character. She used it with her mother; used it with her Victor, too, and often wanted not to. How she was wishing, now, that she could buy the blouse herself, and *make* him see how well it suited her! But he was giving her a birthday present; Victor's taste must be consulted.

Why did he buy it here—why didn't he buy something new? Most likely Flo had done this as an acid test for Victor. If he would come and choose the present here, she would accept it—"not unless." The sort of thing she *would* do!

Victor had stood the test, but he resented it. It made him look a fool, and mean into the bargain. And he couldn't bear her mother. Victor might yet prove faithless. *I have something very difficult to say to you.* How would a Victor put it? How would a Flo face this—which would prevail, the summer mouth, the winter eyes? Flo wouldn't have a fastener off her skirt—the right skirt or the wrong one; Flo would do every needle-job without delay. But would that save her in the hour—

The blouse was on. Did the black-framed blue stripes and the alluring little collar on the nape do all for Flo that they had done for Bell before that day? Bell couldn't look to see. The two striped things . . . "I'll have the blouse," she heard Flo say. "How much is it?"

"Fifteen-and-sixpence," faltered Bell.

*"Fifteen-and-sixpence!"*

"Well, you see, it's absolutely new, and it had cost three guineas."

"Why did the lady send it *here,* I wonder!" cried the mother, shrilly.

"It was mine," said Bell. "I—"

"Wore it once or twice, and then got tired of it. 'Oh, I'll send it to the Jumble-Sale and get a price!' that's charity!" Soft scarlet mother was in arms for Flo.

Flo said: "For goodness' sake be quiet, mother." Then she took off the blouse and looked at Bell. The summer mouth, but not the winter eyes, was pleading: "Make it less!"

But Bell saw the two striped things. "I—I didn't fix the prices," Bell said, pleading too.

"Here, never mind the damage!" Victor cried. "Have it." He plunged a hand into his pocket. "Then we can get out."

Flo, with her eyes like lightening, uttered: "No!"

"Lord, what's the matter now?"

She didn't answer him; she walked away. Her mother, quivering still with anger, whispered (but Bell could hear): "You've hurt her feelings, Victor. You forgot. *You* weren't to pay till we were home."

"Feelings—I'm fair fed up with feelings! Coming to a place like this. . . . Here, let's get out." He proffered a pound note. Bell did not take it; she was gazing where Flo stood. As if Flo knew, she turned and came back to the stall—pale, chill again, but resolute.

"I won't have that. It isn't worth the money. . . . Thank you, madam. . . . come along."

They left the hall. Bell heard the mother saying as they went: "Well, that one *has* a nerve!"

"Twelve shillings and sixpence for Flo's better luck!" thought Bell, as she put back the blouse among the things that all were listed at three shillings. "Mother is right. I *have* a nerve."

And nerves were like the fluttering pale moths, and like the thoughts. Next time, she mustn't care. Skirts should be plain or striped—she'd have no nerve.

# ANOTHER TEMPLE GONE[1]

By C. E. MONTAGUE

(From *The London Mercury*)

## I

THEY say that there may be a speck of quiet lodged at the central point of a cyclone. Round it everything goes whirling. It alone sits at its ease, as still as the end of an axle that lets the wheel, all about it, whirl any wild way it likes.

That was the way at Gartumna in those distant years when the "land war" was blowing great guns all over the rest of the County Clare. Gartumna lay just at the midst of that tempest. But not a leaf stirred in the place. You paid your rent if you could, for the coat that the old colonel had on his back—and he never out of the township—was that worn you'd be sorry. Suppose you hadn't the cash, still you were not "put out of it." All that you'd have to suffer was that good man buzzing about your holding, wanting to help; he would be all in a fidget trying to call to mind the way that some heathen Dane, that he had known when a boy, used to be-devil salt butter back into fresh—that or how Montenegrins would fatten a pig on any wisp of old trash that would come blowing down the high road. A kind man, though he never got quit of the queer dream he had that he knew how to farm.

Another practising Christian we had was Father O'Reilly. None of the sort that would charge you half the girl's fortune before they'd let the young people set foot in the church. And, when it was done, he'd come to the

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party and sing the best song of anyone there. However, at practical goodness Tom Farrell left the entire field at the post. Tom had good means: a farm in fee simple—the land, he would often tell us, the finest in Ireland, "every pitaty the weight of the world if you'd take it up in your hand"; turf coming all but in at the door to be cut; besides, the full of a creel of fish in no more than the time you'd take dropping a fly on the stream: the keeper had married Tom's sister. People would say, "Ach, the match Tom would be for a girl!" and gossips liked counting the "terrible sum" that he might leave when he'd die, if only he knew how to set any sort of value on money. But this he did not. The widow Burke, who knew more about the great world than a body might think, despaired of the man because, she said, "no one could come and ask for a thing but he'd give it them." Then, as she warmed to the grateful labour of letting you know what was what, the widow might add: "I question will Tom ever make a threepenny piece, or a penny itself, out of that old construction he has away there in the bog."

At these words a hearer would give a slight start and glance cannily round, knowing that it would be no sort of manners to give a decent body like Sergeant Maguire the botheration and torment of hearing the like of that said out aloud. But the Sergeant would never be there. For he, too, had his fine social instincts. He would be half a mile off, intent on his duty, commanding the two decent lads that were smoking their pipes, one on each of his flanks, in the tin police hut away down the road. Gartumna did not doubt that this tactful officer knew more than he ever let on. A man of his parts must surely have seen, if not smelt, that no unclean or common whisky, out of a shop, had emitted the mellow sunshine transfiguring recent christenings and wakes. But who so coarse as to bring a functionary so right-minded up against the brute choice between falling openly short in professional zeal and wounding the gentle bosom of Gartumna's peace?

And yet the widow's sonorous soprano, or somebody

else's, may have been raised once too often on this precarious theme. For, on one of the warmest June mornings that ever came out of the sky, Sergeant Maguire paraded his whole army of two, in line, on a front of one mile, with himself as centre file and file of direction, and marched out in this extremely open order into the fawn-coloured wilderness of the bog. "You'll understand, the two of yous," he had said to his right flank, Constable Boam, and to Constable Duffy, his left, "that this is a sweeping or dhragging movement that we're making."

The sun was high already; your feverish early starts were no craze of the Sergeant's. The air over the bog had tuned up for the day to its loudest and most multitudinous hum and hot click of grasshoppers and bees; all the fawn surface swam in a water-coloured quiver of glare; the coarse, juiceless grass and old roots, leathery and slippery, tripped up the three beaters' feet. Hour by hour the long morning greased and begrimed the three clean-shaven good-soldier faces that had set out on the quest; noon came blazingly on; its savage vertical pressure seemed to quell and mute with an excess of heat the tropical buzz of all the basking bog life that the morning's sunshine had inspirited; another hour and the bog was swooning, as old poets say, under the embraces of the sun, her friend, when a thin column of more intensely quivering air, a hundred yards off to the Sergeant's half-left, betrayed some source of an ardour still more fiery than the sun's. Just for the next five or ten minutes, no more, the sergeant had some good stalking. Then it was all over. The hunting was done: nothing left but to whistle in his flank men and go over the haul.

The tub and worm of the illicit still had not been really hidden; they were just formally screened with a few blocks of turf as though in silent appeal to the delicacy of mankind to accept as adequate this symbolic tribute to the convention of a seemly reticence. Farrell, a little, neatly-made, fine-featured man with a set, contained face, but with all the nervousness of him quivering out into the restless tips of his small, pointed fingers, gazed at the three stolid uniformed bulks, so much grosser than

he, while they disrobed his beloved machinery of that decent light vesture and rummaged with large coarse hands among the mysteries of his craft. He wore the Quakerish black suit and the broad and low-crowned soft black hat in which a respectable farmer makes his soul on a Sunday morning. Silent and seemingly not ashamed, nor yet enraged, neither the misdemeanant caught in the act nor the parent incensed by a menace to its one child, he looked on, grave and almost compassionate. So might the high priestess of Vesta have looked on when the Gaulish heathen came butting into the shrine and messed about with the poker and tongs of the goddess's eternal flame. How could the poor benighted wretches know the mischief that they might be doing the world?

Sergeant Maguire, too, may have had his own sense of our kind's tragic blindness quickened just then—that a man, a poor passionate man, should so rush upon his own undoing! "Ach, it's a pity of you, Farrell," he presently said. "A pity—you with the grand means that you have of your own! An' you to be out here, distillin' pocheen!"

"Pocheen!" The little, precise, nervous voice of Farrell ran up into a treble of melancholy scorn. With an austere quality in his movements he drew a brown stoneware jar from among some heaped cubes of turf that the barbarians had not yet disarranged. From another recess he took a squat tumbler. Into this he poured from the jar enough to fill a liqueur glass rather smaller than most. "Tell me," he bade almost sternly, holding the tumbler out to Maguire, "d'ye call that pocheen?"

"Ye can take a sup first," was the canny reply. Maguire had heard how Eastern kings always make cooks and premiers taste first.

Farrell absorbed the tot, drop by drop. He did not cross himself first, but there was something about his way of addressing himself to the draught that would make you think of a man crossing himself before some devout exercise or taking the shoes from off his feet before stepping on some holy ground. As the potion irrigated his soul he seemed to draw off from the touch of this clamorous world into some cloistral retreat. From these contemplative

shades he emerged, controlling a sigh, a little time after the last drop had done its good office. He poured out for Maguire.

"Well, here's luck," said the Sergeant, raising the glass, "and a light sentence beyond." The good fellow's tone conveyed what the etiquette of the service would not allow him to say—that in the day of judgment every mitigating circumstance would be freshly remembered.

Up to this his fortieth year Maguire, conversing with the baser liquors of this world and not with philtres of transfiguration, had counted it sin to drink his whisky as if it would burn him. So the whole of the tot was now about to descend his large-bore throat in close order, as charges of shot proceed through the barrel of a gun. But the needful peristaltic action of the gullet had scarcely commenced when certain tidings of great joy were taken in at the palate and forwarded express to an astonished brain. "Mother of God!" the Sergeant exclaimed. "What sort of a hivven's delight is this you've invented for all souls in glory?"

A sombre satisfaction gleamed out of Farrell's monkish face. Truth was coming into its own, if only too late. The heathen was seeing the light. "It's the stuff," he said gravely, "that made the old gods of the Greeks and Romans feel sure they were gods."

"Be cripes they were right," asseverated Maguire. He was imbibing drop by drop now, as the wise poets of all times have done, and not as the topers, the swillers of cocktails, punch and cup and any old filth only fit to fill up the beasts that perish. Not hoggishness only, but infinite loss would it have seemed to let any one drop go about its good work as a mere jostled atom, lost in a mob of others. If ever the bounty of Heaven should raise a bumper crop of Garricks on earth, you would not use them as so many supers, would you?

Farrell, after a short pause to collect his thoughts, was stating another instalment of the facts. "There's a soul and a body," he said, "to everything else, the same as ourselves. Any malt you'll have drunk, to this day, was the body of whisky only—the match of these old lumps

of flesh that we're all of us draggin' about till we die. The soul of the stuff's what you've got in your hand."

"It is that," said the Sergeant, and chewed the last drop like a lozenge. He now perceived that the use of large, bold, noble figures of speech, like this of Farrell's, was really the only way to express the wonderful thoughts filling a man's mind when he is at his best. That was the characteristic virtue of Farrell's handiwork. Its merely material parts were, it is true, pleasant enough. They seemed, while you sipped, to be honey, warm sunshine embedded in amber and topaz, the animating essence of lustrous brown velvet, and some solution of all the mellowest varnish that ever ripened for eye or ear the glow of Dutch landscape or Cremona fiddle. No sooner, however, did this potable sum of all the higher physical embodiments of geniality and ardour enter your frame than a major miracle happened in the domain of the spirit: you suddenly saw that the most freely soaring poetry, all wild graces and quick turns and abrupt calls on your wits, was just the most exact, business-like way of treating the urgent practical concerns of mankind.

So the Sergeant's receivers were well tuned to take in great truths when Farrell, first measuring out the due dram for Constable Duffy, resumed, "You'll remember the priest that died on us last year?"

"I do that, rest his soul," said each of the other two Catholics. Constable Boam was only a lad out of London, jumped by some favour into the force. But a good lad.

"Ye'll remember," Farrell continued, "the state he was in at the end? Perished with thinness, and he filled with the spirit of God the way you'd see the soul of him shining out through the little worn webbin' of flesh he had on, the match for a flame that's in one of the Chinese lanterns you'd see made of paper. Using up the whole of his body, that's what the soul of him was—convertin' the flesh of it bit by bit into soul till hardly a tittle of body was left to put in the ground. You could lift the whole with a finger."

"Now aren't ye the gifted man?" The words seemed to break, of themselves, out of Constable Duffy. Rapt with the view of entire new worlds of thought, and the

feel of new powers for tackling them, Duffy gazed open-lipped and wide-eyed at Farrell the giver.

Farrell's face acknowledged, with no touch of wicked pride, this homage to truth. *Non nobis, Domine.* Austere, sacerdotal, Farrell inspected the second enraptured proselyte. Then he went on, his eyes well fixed on some object or other far out on the great bog's murmurous waste—the wilfully self-mesmerising stare of the mystic far gone. "The body's the real old curse. Not a thing in the world but it's kept out of being the grand thing it's got the means in it to be if it hadn't a hunk of a body always holding it back. You can't even have all the good there is in a song without some old blether of words would go wrong on your tongue as likely as not. And in Ireland the glory an' wonder that's sent by the will of God to gladden the heart of a man has never got shut till this day of sour old mashes of barley and malt and God alone knows what sort of dishwashin's fit to make a cow vomit, or poisons would blister half of the lining off the inside of an ass."

Constable Duffy was no man of words. But just at this moment he gained his first distinct view of philosophy's fundamental distinction between matter and form, and the prospect so ravished his whole being that as he handed in the drained tumbler to Farrell he murmured in a kind of pensive ecstasy, "Hurroosh to your soul!" and for a long time afterwards was utterly lost in the joys of contemplation.

Constable Boam's reversionary interest in paradise had now matured. While Farrell ministered to Boam, the grapes of the new wine of thought began abruptly to stammer through the lips of the Sergeant. "Aye! Every man has a pack of old trash discommodin' his soul. Pitaties and meal and the like—worked up into flesh on the man. An' the whole of it made of the dirt in the fields a month or two back! The way it's a full barrow-load of the land will be walking on every two legs that you'd see shankin' past! It's what he's come out of. And what he goes back into being. Aye and what he can't do without having, as long as he lasts. An' yet it's not he. An' yet he

must keep a fast hold on it always, or else he'll be dead. An' yet I'll engage he'll have to be fighting it always—it and the sloth it would put on the grand venomous life he has in him. God help us, it's difficult." Along the mazy path that has ever followed in the wake of Socrates the Sergeant's mind slowly tottered, clinging at each turn to some reminiscence of Farrell's golden words, as a child makes its first adventurous journey on foot across the wide nursery floor, working from chair to chair for occasional support.

"Sorra a scrap of difficulty about it," Farrell assured him, "once you've got it firm set in your mind that it's all an everlasting turnin' of body into soul that's required. All of a man's body that's nothing at all but body is nothing but divvil. The job is to cut a good share of it right out of you, clever and clean, an' then to fill up the whole of the bit you have left with all the will and force of your soul till it's soul itself that the whole has become, or the next thing to the whole, the way the persons that lay you out after you die, and the soul has quitted, would wonder to see the weeny scrap that was left for anybody to wake. You could take anything that there is in the world and go on scourin' an' scourin' away at the dross it has all about it and so releasin' the workin's of good till you'd have the thing that was nine parts body and one part soul at the start changed to the other way round, aye and more. By the grace of God that's the work I've been at in this place. Half-way am I now, as you can see for yourselves, to transformin' the body of anny slushy old drink you'd get in a town into the soul of all kindness and joy that our blessed Lord put into the water the good people had at the wedding. Nothing at all to do but walk straight on, the way I was going, to work the stuff up to the pitch that you'd not feel it wetting your throat, but only the love of God and of man, and the true wisdom of life, and comprehension of this and of that, flowing softly into your mind. Divvil a thing stood in me way, save only"—here the mild-hearted fanatic stooped for a moment from those heights where his spirit abode, to note with a wan smile of indulgence

a little infirmity of mankind's—"a few of the boys do be lying around in the bog, the way they have me worn with the fear they'd lap the stuff hot out of the tub an' be killed if I'd turn me back for one instiant."

"They'll quit, from this out," the Sergeant said, with immense decision. "I'll not have anny mischievous trash of the sort molestin' a man at his work."

"Ow! it's a wonderful country," Constable Boam breathed to himself. The words had been rising to Boam's Cockney lips at almost every turn of affairs since his landfall at Kingstown. Now they came soft and low, soft and low. A peace passing all understanding had just invaded the wandering South-East Briton's mind.

## II

Let not the English be tempted to think that by no other race can a law be dodged for a long time without overt scandal. Neither the Sergeant nor either man of his force was ever a shade the worse for liquor that summer. To Tom's priestly passion for purging more and yet more of the baser alloys out of the true cult there responded a lofty impulse, among the faithful, to keep undeflowered by any beastlike excess the magical garden of which he had given them the key.

For it was none of your common tavern practice to look in at Tom's when the loud afternoon hum of the bees was declining reposefully towards the cool velvety play-time of bats and fat moths. All that plays and the opera, lift of romance and the high, vibrant pitch of great verse are to you lucky persons of culture; travel, adventure, the throwing wide open of sudden new windows for pent minds to stare out, the brave stir of mystical gifts in the heart, gleams of enchanting light cast on places unthought of, annunciatary visits of that exalting sense of approach to some fiery core of all life, watch-tower and power-house both, whence he who attains might see all manner of things run radiantly clear in their courses and passionately right. The local police did not offer this account of their spiritual sensations at Tom's, any more than the rest of

Gartumna did. But all this, or a vision of this, was for mankind to enjoy as it took its ease on the crumbling heaps of dry turf by the still, what time the inquisitive owls were just beginning to float in soundless circles overhead. From some dull and chilly outer rim of existence each little group of Tom's friends would draw in together towards a glowing focus at which the nagging "No," "No," "No," of life's common hardness was sure to give place to the benedictive "Yes," "Yes," "O, yes," of a benignly penetrative understanding of earth, heaven, and everything else. Who such a beast as to attempt to debauch the delicate fairy conducting these mysteries? Too good to imperil, they seemed, besides, too wonderful to end. Dust, all the same, hath dimmed Helen's eyes, which seemed to so many people as if their light could not go out.

All revolutions, some pundits say, are, at bottom, affairs of finance. And Mrs. Burke had diagnosed truly. Tom bore within him the germ of that mortal illness of giving away all before him. His reign in all hearts at Gartumna resembled that of the *Roi Soleil* over France both in the measureless glory of its meridian and in the fundamental insolvency of its afternoon. He had always given the work of his hands to the worthy, free and without price. The fitness to receive was all: something sacramental about the consumption of his latest masterpiece by small, close-drawn parties of beautiful souls made the passing of coin at such seasons abhorrent to Tom. "Would you have me keep a shebeen?" he had indignantly asked, when the Sergeant made a stout, shamefaced effort to pay. So, from day to day, they kept up an urbane routine month after month. Tom would always proffer the squat glass with a shy, tentative gesture; this made it clear that in the sight of God, so to speak, no such freedom had ever been taken, or thought of, before. The Sergeant would always accept in the jocose, casual tone of a martinet making one playful and really quite absurd exception to his rules, the case being one which, anyhow, cannot recur, so that there need be no uneasiness about setting up a precedent now. But all summers end, and urbanity butters no parsnips.

The brownness of later August was deepening round Tom's place of research before he saw that the thing couldn't go on as it was. He suddenly saw it, about ten o'clock one morning. That evening, when the day's tide of civilian beneficiaries had tactfully receded from the still, and the police, their normal successors, had laid rifle and helmet aside, Tom held up his dreadful secret from minute to minute while the grey moth of twilight darkened on into brown-moth-coloured night. He tried to begin telling, but found he could not trust both his voice and his face at the same time. As soon as his face could no longer be clearly seen he worked up a prodigious assumption of calm and said to the three monumental silhouettes, planted black on their three plinths of turf, "I'm ruined. Apt you'll be to find me quit out of the place if you come back in two days or three."

The Sergeant leapt off his plinth, levered up by the shock. "God help us!" he said. "What wild trash are you just after gabbing?"

"Me fortune's destroyed," Tom pursued. His face had crumpled up with distress as soon as he began; but the kind darkness hid that; his voice was in fairly good preservation. "I borrad the full of the worth of me holding to get"—and no doubt he was going on, "get along with the work I'm at, here," but felt, perhaps, that this would not be quite the thing, considering. He broke off and said only, "The back of me hand to the Jew mortgagee that's foreclosing."

"God help us," again said the Sergeant. "And we drinking the creature out of house and home a good while back! Men—!" He abruptly stiffened all the muscles of Duffy and Boam with the cogent parade voice that braces standing-easy into standing-at-ease. Then he thought for a moment. O, there was plenty to think of. Tom, the decent body, put out of his farm by the sheriff. Police aid, no doubt, requisitioned. The whole district, perhaps, in a hullabaloo, like all those around it. The Garden of Eden going straight back to prairie. He must be firm. "Men," he resumed, "are we standing by to see a man ruined that's done the right thing by ourselves?

I engage it's a mod'rate share only of cash he'll require to get on in peace with his work. An' the three of us unmarried men, with full pay and allowances."

The heart of the ancient and good-natured people of England aligned itself instantly with the chivalrous spirit of the Gael. "Thet's right, Sawgeant," said Constable Boam.

Constable Duffy's range of expression had not the width to cover fully the whole diversity of life. He ejaculated, "Hurroosh to your souls! Five shillin's a week."

"Sime 'ere," subjoined Boam.

"Mine's ten," said Maguire. "I've got me rank to remember."

So swiftly and smoothly may any man's business pass, with seeming success, into a small limited company. Farrell, the innocent Farrell, took heart afresh and toiled on at the disengagement of Bacchus, the actual godhead, from out his too, too solid coatings of flesh. The force stilled the first wild fears of its heart and felt it was getting good value for its money—a quiet beat for the body, and for the soul an ever-open line of communication with the Infinite. Through all Gartumna a warning shudder had run at the first crisis. Now the world seemed safe again; the civilian lamb lay down once more beside the three large lions of the law, dreaming it to be enough that these were no man-eaters. Children all, chasing a butterfly further and further into the wilds, under a blackening sky. While they chased, the good old Resident Magistrate, Ponting, was dying of some sudden internal queerness he had, he that had never done harm to a soul if looking the other way could prevent it. And into Old Ponto's seat was climbing a raging dragon of what a blind world calls efficiency.

Major Coburn came, in fact, of that redoubtable breed of super-dragons, the virtuous, masterful, hundred-eyed cavalry sergeants who carve their way to commissions somewhat late in their careers. Precise as some old maids of exemplary life, as fully posted up in the tricks of the crowd that they have left as a schoolboy turned by magic into a master, they burn with a fierce, clear flame of

desire to make up the enjoyable arrears of discipline that they might, under luckier stars, have exercised in their youth. Being the thing he was, how could the man Coburn fail to do harm, with all the harm that there was crying out to be done?

He sent for Sergeant Maguire. Quin, the District Inspector—quite enough of an Argus himself without any extra prompting—was there when the Sergeant marched into the Major's room. To outward view at this terrible moment Maguire was fashioned out of first-rate wood. Within he was but a tingling system of apprehension. First, with gimlet eyes the two superiors perforated his outer timbers in numerous places, gravely demoralising the nerve centers within. When these exploratory borings had gone pretty far, the crimelessness of Gartumna was touched upon, in a spirit of coarse curiosity, far, far from felicitation.

Maguire faintly propounded the notion that keeping the law was just a hobby rife among the wayward natives. "They're queer bodies," he said in conclusion.

No fantasy like that could be expected to weigh with a new broom possessed with its first fine passion for sweeping.

"Don't tell *me*," the Major snapped. His voice vibrated abominably with menace. "You know as well as I do, Sergeant, the sort of a squadron it is where a man's never crimed." He paused, to let this baleful thrust tell its tale in the agonised Sergeant's vitals. Then he went on—"and you know what it means," and again he paused and the four gimlet eyes resumed their kindly task of puncturing him at assorted points.

To Maguire's previous distresses was now added the choice mortification which always attends the discovery that you have been firing off an abstract and friarly morality at heavily armour-plated men of the world. With no loss of penetrative power the Major continued: "Screening—that's what it means. Sergeants who need the stripes taking off them—that's what it means. Go back to your duty and see to it."

Sergeant Maguire withdrew.

"He'd not comperhend. He'd not comperhend," the Sergeant despairingly told himself, over and over again, as he legged back the four miles to Gartumna under the early falling September dew. If only the darkened mind of Major Coburn *could* gain understanding! Anybody on earth, you might think, if he had any wit at all to know good from bad, must see that this was a case in a thousand—that here, if ever in man's history, the spirit which giveth life was being borne down by the letter that killeth. But that body Coburn—! Maguire had been a soldier, he knew those middle-aged rankers. "Shut-headed cattle!" he groaned to himself. "No doin' anything with them." The dew was quite heavy. Sundown, autumn, and all that was best in the world going the way of honeysuckle and wild rose. Before he reached the tin hut one of the longest in human use among Melancholy's standard dyes had suffused pretty deeply the tissues of the Sergeant's mind.

It seemed next morning as if that summer's glowing pomp of lustrous months were taking its leave with a grand gesture of self-revival on the eve of extinction, as famous actors will bend up every nerve in order to be most greatly their old selves on the night of farewell. Midsummer heat was burning again, and the quicksilvery haze shimmered over the bog when Maguire went out alone to see Farrell, just as the Sergeant remembered it on the day when the scorched air from the furnace first showed him the still. Farrell, a little leaner now, a little less natty in his clothes, a little more absent-eyed with the intensity of a single absorption, raised from his work the patiently welcoming face of genius called away by affairs of this world from its heavenly traffic with miracles.

"All destroyed, Tom," the Sergeant said quickly. The longer he waited to bash in the unsuspecting upturned face of Farrell's child-like happiness, the more impracticable would it have grown. "The glory," he added by way of detail, "is departed entirely."

Farrell stared. He did not yet take it in well enough to be broken.

"It's this devastatin' divvil," the Sergeant went on, "that

they've sent us in lieu of Old Ponto, God rest his kind soul."

Farrell did not seem to have even heard of that sinister accession. They say there were Paris fiddlers who fiddled right through the French Revolution and did not hear about the Bastille or the Terror. Live with the gods and deal with the Absolute Good, and Amurath's succession to Amurath may not excite you.

"God help the man, can't he see he's destroyed?" Fretful and raw from a night of wakeful distress, the Sergeant spoke almost crossly, although it was for Tom that he felt most sorely in all that overshadowed world.

The worker in the deep mine whence perfection is hewn peered, as it were, half-abstractedly up the shaft. Not otherwise might some world-leading thinker in Moscow have looked partly up from his desk to hear, with semi-interested ears, that a Bolshevik mob was burning the house.

The disorganised Sergeant veered abruptly all the way round from pettishness to compunction. "Dear knows," he said, "that it's sorry I am for ye, Tom." He collected himself to give particulars of the catastrophe. "A hustlin' kind of a body," he ended; "et up with zeal till he'd turn the grand world that we have into a parcel of old rags and bones and scrap iron before you could hold him at all. An' what divvil's work would he have me be at, for a start, but clap somebody into the jug, good, bad, or indifferent? Now do ye see? There isn't a soul in the place but yourself that does the least taste of a thing that anny court in the wide world could convict for. What with you and the old priest and the new, and the old Colonel below, you've made the whole of the people a very fair match for the innocent saints of God. An' this a flea of a creature you couldn't ever trust to be quiet an' not stravadin' out over the bog by himself like a spy, the way he'd soon have the whole set of us supping tribulation with a spoon of sorrow!"

Farrell subsided on one of the seat-like piles of sunned peat. The fearful truth had begun to sink in. He sat for a while silent, tasting the bitter cup.

The heat that day was a wonder. Has anyone reading this ever been in the Crown court at Assizes when three o'clock on a torrid dog-day comes in the dead vast and middle of some commonplace murder case, of poignant interest to no one except the accused? Like breeze and bird and flower in the song, judge and usher, counsel and witnesses, all the unimperilled parties alike "confess the hour." Questions are slowly thought of by the Bar and languidly put; the lifeless answers are listlessly heard; motes of dust lazily stirring in shafts of glare thrown from side windows help to drowse you as though they were poppy-seeds to inhale; all eyes but one pair are beginning to glaze; the whole majestic machine of justice seems to flag and slow down as if it might soon subside into utter siesta, just where it is, like a sun-drugged Neapolitan pavior asleep on his unfinished pavement. Only the shabby party penned in the dock is proof against all the pharmacopœia of opiates. Ceaselessly shifting his feet, resettling his neckcloth, hunting from each sleepy face to the next for some gleam of hope for himself, he would show, were anyone there not too deeply lulled to observe, how far the proper quality and quantity of torment is capable of resisting the action of Nature's own anodynes.

Out in the bog a rude likeness of that vigil of pain, set amidst the creeping peace of the lotus, was now being staged. Under the rising heat of the tropical day the whole murmurous pulse of the bog, its flies and old bees, all its audible infestation with life seemed to be sinking right down into torpor while Sergeant Maguire's woe-begone narrative dribbled off into silence and Tom came to the last of his hopeless questions. Questions? No; nothing so open: mere ineffectual sniffings among the bars of the closed cage of their fate. Then both lay back on the warm turf, some ten feet apart, Tom staring blankly straight up into the unpitying blue while the Sergeant stuck it out numbly within the darkened dome of his helmet, held over his face, striving within the rosy gloom of that tabernacle to gather up all his strength for the horrible plunge.

The plunge had to come. The Sergeant rose on one

elbow. He marshalled his voice. "There's the one way of it, Tom," he got out at last. "Will you quit out of this and away to the States before I lose all me power to keep a hand off you?"

Farrell partly rose, too. His mind had not yet journeyed so far as the Sergeant's along the hard road.

"I'll make up the fare from me savings," the Sergeant said humbly.

Farrell turned upon him a void, desolate face. The Sergeant hurried on "The three of us down below will clear up when you're gone. An' we'll sling the still for you into the bog-hole. Aye, be sections, will we. An' everything."

Farrell seemed to be eyeing at every part of its bald surface the dead wall of necessity. That scrutiny ended, he quietly said, "Me heart's broke," and lay back again flat on the peat. So did the Sergeant. Nothing stirred for awhile except the agonised quiver and quake of the burnt air over the homely drain-pipe chimney of Tom's moribund furnace.

## III

The Sergeant wangled a day's leave of absence to go down to Queenstown the day Farrell sailed for New York. Farrell absently waving a hand from some crowded lower deck of the departing ship was a figure of high tragic value. Happy the mole astray above ground, or the owl routed out into the sun by bad boys, compared with the perfect specialist cast out upon a bewilderingly general world. The Sergeant came away from the quay with his whole spirit laid waste—altruistic provinces and egoistic alike; his very soul sown with salt. He had been near the centre of life all the summer and felt the beat of its heart! now he was somewhere far out on its chill, charmless periphery. "As the earth when leaves are dead." He had not read Shelley. Still, just the same thing.

"I've done me duty," he said, in an almost God-cursing tone, as the three of them sat in the tin hut that night, among ashes, and heard the hard, perpetual knock of the rain on the roof, "an' I've done down meself."

"Aye, and the whole of us," Constable Duffy lamented, not meaning reproach, but sympathy only; just his part in the common threnody, antiphone answering unto phone.

Constable Boam had a part in it, too. " 'Eaven an' 'Ell, 'Eaven an' 'Ell!" He almost chanted his dreary conspectus of their vicissitudes. "Ow! A proper mix-up! Gord! it's a wonderful country!"

Nothing more was heard of Farrell. He may have died before he could bring back into use, beside the waters of Babylon, that one talent which 'twas death to hide. Or the talent itself may have died out in his bosom. Abrupt terminations have ere now been put to the infinite; did not Shakespeare dry up, for no visible cause, when he moved back to Stratford? All that we know is that Tom's genius can never have got into its full swing in the States. For, if it had, the States could never have gone to the desperate lengths that they afterwards did against the god of his worship.

# THE INSPIRED 'BUSMAN[1]

By ELINOR MORDAUNT

(From *The Saturday Review*)

THE Roman Road was up, just past Pigtail. It was not yet dark, nowhere near dark: just grey, a queer grey which showed the houses flat, as though cut out of grey velvet, the people in the streets oddly flattened out, grey people, anyhow: women like flittermice, down-at-heel, with no time to pull their stockings tight; men who lounged, lolloping along, their pipes in their mouths, squaring their shoulders to push their way through the crowd.

Oh, no, not dark; by no manner of means dark—just that grey which is nothing to look at, and yet the very deuce to look *through,* in a strange place where the cross-streets seem to dart out at you, as if to frighten you into going on, dare you to turn.

The red lamps across the disembowelled roadway shone like eyes, exotic and altogether alien to, unlike West Ham: "Tiger, tiger, burning bright" sort of eyes.

The 'bus-driver was new to the route; to the work, too, by the look of him: buccaneerish, with small sparkling black eyes and what seemed like more teeth than most people, very white in a lean, brown face. He handled his 'bus as though she had been a three-decker. No, no, better than that, a pirate prow, a pirate of the Orient Seas.

The fat passengers had the best of it, wedged tight, tyred round like bicycle-wheels; by the time the thin ones got to the end of their journey—a long way off, as yet—they'd no skin left on their elbows: not much loss, either,

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for no one wanted to look at them—you know the elbows of a thin woman, all knobly skin and bone like a dak-bungalow fowl.

There was only one man among them all, and he was full of beer and mild oblivion.

The conductor, a bleached earwig of a man—teetotaller from Mucking—was scared out of his wits; first at the way the driver drove, then at the fashion in which he appeared to caress his 'bus, somewhere about her frontal bone so that she stood bolt upright on her tail—have you ever seen a lobster do that? you can mesmerize a lobster precisely in this way, keep it standing, rampant, regardant—and swung her round a corner only just in time, her nose well up against the barricade, the lustful lamps.

They ought to have turned off two streets back; that was the orthodox way, now that the road was up. The conductor had leant dangerously far out over the top of his 'bus to shriek this information to the driver, who, with his boot-button eyes fixed, all his white teeth bared, his face pulled a little to the right side, showing one long furrow in his brown cheek, his cap rakishly over the right ear, went on his way as though deaf and blind to all apart from his own maniacal dream; for even when his assistant went inside, opened the little window at the back of his head and screamed into his ear, he still took no notice whatever, though the conductor swore to having seen his ears shake with the wind of his shrieking.

Having wheeled to the right, so sharply that the passengers found themselves bunched together like sausages—while one baby flew from the arms of a woman on the outside and landed in the corner lamp, happily already broken and still unlighted, so that it lodged there neat as a snail in its shell—the driver sped upon his own way, nor' by nor'-east, regardless of all else.

No fresh passengers joined the 'bus—but then, how could they? Two or three dismounted, but this was by an involuntary movement; they had got up, thinking that they might stop the new Rake's Progress by ringing the bell—the idea of it!—by ringing the bell!—stop that 'bus, as it was being driven by that driver, with the mere

sound of a bell!—and were left behind, hung in mid-air until the road rose up and joined them.

"Let 'im go—oh, let 'im go! By all manner o' means let 'im go," murmured the fat man ecstatically. One of the lost passengers had been sitting next to him, and he swelled a little more, settling down with a sigh of contentment, like a man with a double bed to himself.

"Tea." One word uttered with a sniff by a woman who looked like a-drop-of-summat-else-in-it, sorterbody, so to speak.

Just that one word, but it touched them all. The conductor leant over the front of the 'bus once more: strained out over it—strained so that he was never altogether the same man again—was sent to Guy's and short-circuited by Sir ———— shrieking "Stop!"—they all shrieked "Stop!" One old lady inside stood up, got her umbrella out through the little window at the back of the driver and poked the man in the back.

He turned and winked at her, but he did not stop, did not even slacken his speed, not for a moment.

"Let 'im go," said the fat man—"let 'im go ter—" He mentioned a place without a 'bus route, actually without a 'bus route! And *that* will show you. Oh, benighted—no other word for it! "Let 'im go," he said; and then added, very softly: "I was married yesterday."

Go he did: roaring through Havering-atte-Bower, and so on to America—oh, don't talk to me, you make me tired; no one of any education can imagine that there is only one America—past Soap Ho, Copyhold, Nine Ashes, Spurries: through Shallow Bowells, Chignall Smealy and Cobblers' Green.

"Supper—u-u-u-ugh!" It was the same woman who had said "Tea," and they all groaned; a little artificially, though: they didn't want supper, were beginning to feel lulled like babes in their cradles; beginning to think of all the things they had left behind them, husbands and such-like, with a certain sense of comfort, freedom; for there are few situations without some saving quality. Apart from that, only think what they were getting for their money—above all, the ones with the penny ticket.

The surface of the country rose, the air freshened. The grey was changed to a deep indigo-blue, extraordinarily translucent and bathed in light: as though the evening had gone out of half-mourning.

The street-lamps—and what happened to the one with the baby in it no one knows; the mother herself kept quiet about it, bore her grief bravely, for the creature was one of a pair of exceptionally fretful twins, and, no one could blame anyone in particular; besides there was the insurance, and, after all, one baby at a time is enough for anyone—too many for most. What was I saying? —there is something about the very memory of that 'bus that has got me into the way of taking wrong turns—— Oh, I know. The lights shot out one by one, as though the night flicked them off the point of her thumb; while first the barrows along the sides of the pavement, then the shops and finally the houses—houses in solid rows, jammed-up masses of houses, workmen's dwellings, public-houses, churches—became smaller and scarcer and more box-like, interspersed with irregular, left-over scraps of land, showing a few gaunt cabbage stalks, as though there had been some faint idea of agriculture; giving way to one aspidestra in a pot in the parlour window, as altogether easier; an abandonment of the outer earth to empty tins, broken bottles and old boots.

The 'bus shot on through these, sloughing them off, and came to real gardens; like Early Victorian bouquets, tightly packed with flowers, shedding sweetness upon the night air: open fields with cows—not milk-cans with taps, but real cows—thick hedges and deep clumps of trees, breathing out the warmth of the day before. For it had got to that, "the day after," I mean.

On and on and on. The passengers had ceased to fidget, to screw themselves tight up inside, as though they could, in this way, act as an actual brake to the 'bus, drawing back their chins into their necks, screwing up their eyes, clenching their hands.

One woman inside, she of the black jet-beaded blouse, who had looked so sharply at the little girl with the dusty boots, stabbing her with a glance whenever she so much as

moved her feet, took her on her knee, and pressed her head against her shoulder, so that it no longer jerked from side to side with every movement of the 'bus.

The woman in the man's cap began to sing: "I 'ear —thee—spee-eak o' a be-e-e-e-e-et-ter land"— sang it through to the end, and started again.

Another woman, who had clasped her purse in her hand throughout the entire journey, darting suspicious eyes at her neighbours, put it in her pocket, and folded her hands in her lap with a sigh of contentment.

The moon rose; it was almost full, a clear, pale gold: the air was clear, but the streams wore wisps of white mists completely enwrapping them like nightgowns; the slumbering sheep merged with the grass, white with dew.

The scents came in layers, like a very special cake: elder-blossom, pungent and fierce; lime, maddeningly sweet —that sort of perfume which makes one want something in one's own life to correspond with it; eglantine, clover, meadowsweet. The country was all a sort of smoothed-out up-and-down; villages in the hollows, as though they had dented the field by sitting down there; straggling villages with what is known as "the middle-aged spread," motherly as hens.

The conductor sat on the step: his arms were clasped tight round his middle, but that was merely to hold it firm, keep his front from chafing against his back. No tea—no supper—like enough, no breakfast—not that it mattered; nothing mattered, would ever matter again. His heart was down out of his throat a trifle inflated, but not with fear.

"I might get a job in the country—conducting an 'ay-cart or somefing o' that sort," he thought. "She always said as 'ow she'd like ter live in the country; and then when we're married—" He sighed, sighed with happiness. More like a small and comparatively innocuous tapeworm than a man, he was yet akin to him of whom it was written:

"This man, inconsiderable, mean, yes, a slave, this man is loved and is lord of another's soul."

The dust, thick on the roadway, damped down with

dew, muffled the sound of the wheels; or perhaps the 'bus, like its passengers, breathed more quietly in the clear air. Anyhow, its progress was as near silent as it could well be.

A sense of ineffable bliss came over the passengers; they smiled that bland and secret smile which one may see upon the face of a very young infant. As they drew in the scented air, they felt as though they had been spring-cleaned, the accumulated rubbish of years drawn out of them.

They were traversing a road cut through a thick wood, with the trees like dark and friendly battlements high at either side of them, when the 'bus stopped, and the driver put up one finger.

"Hush!" he said.

It was so quiet, they all heard it, even those inside, while the cessation of movement left them, as it were, hung upon that indolent content which had overcome them; hung like old clothes upon a peg, bearing the semblance of humanity, but emptied of the eternal fidgetiness of humanity, petty ambitions and appetite.

The people inside got out; the outside passengers clambered down the stairs; their movements were stiff from sitting for so long, but they did not feel it. Physically they moved, but spiritually they were stiller than they had ever been in all their lives before, with a strange, inward stillness. There in the night, the wonderful night —with no squall of cats or stamp of policemen or shrieking of belated taxis, or howling of drunken men—they hung serene and detached, as the clear moon in the clear sky. They were like untouched photographic plates, prepared for any impression. They forgot their clothes—even their boots—Monday's wash and Friday's pay-night, and the man calling for the installment on the sewing-machine, and the twopence a week for the burial club.

To look at them as they stood together in the dust-deep road, they were a deplorable blot upon the face of nature; but they did not feel like that. If it were not an expression which they themselves would have used at such times as they were, so to speak, "lush," "fresh," "whittled,"

"screwed," "sewed up"—I should say that they felt "lovely"; and that indeed is the word—lovely and loving and worthy of love.

"Hush!" said the driver again—he need not have said it, for they were silent, as silent as people with adenoids can be—and took off his cap.

They drew themselves upright, stood as the reverent stand for the Credo, and waited. They could not have said for what, but they knew when it came: something which they had been waiting for their whole lives—not for itself, but for all it meant, stood for, finding its echo in their own souls: the clear, exquisite note of the nightingale, broken and tremulous with its own rapture, the wonder and the joy of love, the gift of the night, with its silence, its moon, its stars.

. . . . . .

It was the fat man who drove them back to Barking, having driven a motor-lorry during the war.

"After all, what they're out for is humouring," he said; thinking, not of the 'bus but of his new-made wife, the objections she had raised to his smoking in bed.

The 'bus-driver returned inside. He had not wanted to come; would much rather have been left where he was, standing with his face, upraised to the moon, irradiated by a crooked smile of complete companionship. But the moon would set and day would come, and somehow or other it did not seem altogether decent to leave him there—sort of undressed, as it were, altogether too far out of his body—a 'busless 'bus-driver, deprived of his very reason for being.

But they were kind and gentle to him, as they were kind to each other, to their own families, for a whole day at least.

It was dawn by the time that the fat man and the rightful 'bus-driver reached the depôt with 'buses ranged in rows: 'buses like a school of crimson porpoises, ungainly, shining, panting with eagerness to be off. The Inspector, or Director, or Imperator, or Prime Minister, or what-

ever he might be, received them coldly. "It was a lovely trip," said the fat man, a little regretfully; but the great one, standing at a high desk in the small bare room into which he had led the way, running his stubby forefinger over a chart which lay open upon it, remained untouched by any sort of emotion.

"If a thing like that's happened once, it's bound to happen again," he said, and then: "From Fenchurch Street by Forty-Three; past the Woodman, the Bald-Faced Stag an' Fortis Green Road ter Colney Hatch. He knows the way."

The 'bus-driver's hands were deep in his hip-pockets, his shoulders high, his cap still over his left eye, small and sparkling: it struck the fat man, as he led him outside—for it seemed as though he were in some queer way entirely responsible for him—that he had never, in all his life, seen anyone who looked so entirely happy.

# THE SNIPER[1]

By LIAM O'FLAHERTY

(From *The New Leader*)

THE long June twilight faded into night. Dublin lay enveloped in darkness but for the dim light of the moon that shone through fleecy clouds, casting a pale light as of approaching dawn over the streets and the dark waters of the Liffey. Around the beleaguered Four Courts the heavy guns roared. Here and there through the city, machine-guns and rifles broke the silence of the night, spasmodically, like dogs barking on lone farms. Republicans and Free Staters were waging civil war.

On a roof-top near O'Connell Bridge, a Republican sniper lay watching. Beside him lay his rifle and over his shoulders were slung a pair of field glasses. His face was the face of a student, thin and ascetic, but his eyes had the cold gleam of the fanatic. They were deep and thoughtful, the eyes of a man who is used to look at death.

He was eating a sandwich hungrily. He had eaten nothing since morning. He had been too excited to eat. He finished the sandwich, and, taking a flask of whiskey from his pocket, he took a short draught. Then he returned the flask to his pocket. He paused for a moment, considering whether he should risk a smoke. It was dangerous. The flash might be seen in the darkness, and there were enemies watching. He decided to take the risk.

Placing a cigarette between his lips, he struck a match, inhaled the smoke hurriedly and put out the light. Almost immediately, a bullet flattened itself against the parapet of the roof. The sniper took another whiff and put out the cigarette. Then he swore softly and crawled away to the left.

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Cautiously he raised himself and peered over the parapet. There was a flash and a bullet whizzed over his head. He dropped immediately. He had seen the flash. It came from the opposite side of the street.

He rolled over the roof to a chimney stack in the rear, and slowly drew himself up behind it, until his eyes were level with the top of the parapet. There was nothing to be seen—just the dim outline of the opposite housetop against the blue sky. His enemy was under cover.

Just then an armoured car came across the bridge and advanced slowly up the street. It stopped on the opposite side of the street, fifty yards ahead. The sniper could hear the dull panting of the motor. His heart beat faster. It was an enemy car. He wanted to fire, but he knew it was useless. His bullets would never pierce the steel that covered the grey monster.

Then round the corner of a side street came an old woman, her head covered by a tattered shawl. She began to talk to the man in the turret of the car. She was pointing to the roof where the sniper lay. An informer.

The turret opened. A man's head and shoulders appeared, looking towards the sniper. The sniper raised his rifle and fired. The head fell heavily on the turret wall. The woman darted towards the side street. The sniper fired again. The woman whirled round and fell with a shriek into the gutter.

Suddenly from the opposite roof a shot rang out and the sniper dropped his rifle with a curse. The rifle clattered to the roof. The sniper thought the noise would wake the dead. He stopped to pick the rifle up. He couldn't lift it. His forearm was dead.

"Christ," he muttered, "I'm hit."

Dropping flat on to the roof, he crawled back to the parapet. With his left hand he felt the injured right forearm. The blood was oozing through the sleeve of his coat. There was no pain—just a deadened sensation, as if the arm had been cut off.

Quickly he drew his knife from his pocket, opened it on the breastwork of the parapet, and ripped open the sleeve. There was a small hole where the bullet had

entered. On the other side there was no hole. The bullet had lodged in the bone. It must have fractured it. He bent the arm below the wound. The arm bent back easily. He ground his teeth to overcome the pain.

Then taking out his field dressing, he ripped open the packet with his knife. He broke the neck of the iodine bottle and let the bitter fluid drip into the wound. A paroxysm of pain swept through him. He placed the cotton wadding over the wound and wrapped the dressing over it. He tied the ends with his teeth.

Then he lay still against the parapet, and, closing his eyes, he made an effort of will to overcome the pain.

In the street beneath all was still. The armoured car had retired speedily over the bridge, with the machine gunner's head hanging lifeless over the turret. The woman's corpse lay still in the gutter.

The sniper lay still for a long time nursing his wounded arm and planning escape. Morning must not find him wounded on the roof. The enemy on the opposite roof covered his escape. He must kill that enemy and he could not use his rifle. He had only a revolver to do it. Then he thought of a plan.

Taking off his cap, he placed it over the muzzle of his rifle. Then he pushed the rifle slowly upwards over the parapet, until the cap was visible from the opposite side of the street. Almost immediately there was a report, and a bullet pierced the centre of the cap. The sniper slanted the rifle forward. The cap slipped down into the street. Then catching the rifle in the middle, the sniper dropped his left hand over the roof and let it hang, lifelessly. After a few moments he let the rifle drop to the street. Then he sank to the roof, dragging his hand with him.

Crawling quickly to the left, he peered up at the corner of the roof. His ruse had succeeded. The other sniper, seeing the cap and rifle fall, thought that he had killed his man. He was now standing before a row of chimney pots, looking across, with his head clearly silhouetted against the western sky.

The Republican sniper smiled and lifted his revolver

above the edge of the parapet. The distance was about fifty yards—a hard shot in the dim light, and his right arm was paining him like a thousand devils. He took a steady aim. His hand trembled with eagerness. Pressing his lips together, he took a deep breath through his nostrils and fired. He was almost deafened with the report and his arm shook with the recoil.

Then when the smoke cleared he peered across and uttered a cry of joy. His enemy had been hit. He was reeling over the parapet in his death agony. He struggled to keep his feet, but he was slowly falling forward, as if in a dream. The rifle fell from his grasp, hit the parapet, fell over, bounded off the pole of a barber's shop beneath and then clattered on to the pavement.

Then the dying man on the roof crumpled up and fell forward. The body turned over and over in space and hit the ground with a dull thud. Then it lay still.

The sniper looked at his enemy falling and he shuddered. The lust of battle died in him. He became bitten by remorse. The sweat stood out in beads on his forehead. Weakened by his wound and the long summer day of fasting and watching on the roof, he revolted from the sight of the shattered mass of his dead enemy. His teeth chattered, he began to gibber to himself, cursing the war, cursing himself, cursing everybody.

He looked at the smoking revolver in his hand, and with an oath he hurled it to the roof at his feet. The revolver went off with the concussion and the bullet whizzed past the sniper's head. He was frightened back to his senses by the shock. His nerves steadied. The cloud of fear scattered from his mind and he laughed.

Taking the whiskey flask from his pocket, he emptied it at a draught. He felt reckless under the influence of the spirit. He decided to leave the roof now and look for his company commander, to report. Everywhere around was quiet. There was not much danger in going through the streets. He picked up his revolver and put it in his pocket. Then he crawled down through the sky-light to the house underneath.

When the sniper reached the laneway on the street

level, he felt a sudden curiosity as to the identity of the enemy sniper whom he had killed. He decided that he was a good shot, whoever he was. He wondered did he know him. Perhaps he had been in his own company before the split in the army. He decided to risk going over to have a look at him. He peered around the corner into O'Connell Street. In the upper part of the street there was heavy firing, but around here all was quiet.

The sniper darted across the street. A machine-gun tore up the ground around him with a hail of bullets, but he escaped. He threw himself face downwards beside the corpse. The machine-gun stopped.

Then the sniper turned over the dead body and looked into his brother's face.

# CONTRAIRY MARY[1]

By EDWIN PUGH

(From *The English Review*)

GREY FOOT STREET is an unsavoury by-way in that most unsavoury of towns, Widnes. The folks who exist within its precincts—for theirs can hardly be called a life—do many grievous things unmentionable to ears polite, and use language that is more direct than delicate. They are unsightly and unclean, and there is not even the redeeming virtue of variety in their uniform repulsiveness. Indeed, these shameless, sulphuretted creatures have not even grace enough to be picturesque in their squalor.

But romance is a hardy flower, ungrudging of its perfume. It blooms in the unlikeliest places. Even here, in this acid-eaten waste of dismal swamp, where the only growth is a rancid green fungus, slimy and horrible, and the only water consists of stagnant pools iridescent with foulness—even here it raises its dauntless, dainty head and flutters its bright petals in the tainted air. And oftenest it blows sweetest near to grimy toil-worn hands. Plucked by nerveless fingers whose joints are all warped and discoloured by creeping disease, it lives and thrives under greasy, slack bodices, dying only when the hearts into which it strikes its roots are cold and still.

High above the weedy undergrowth of petty, carking cares and sordid aspirations that clog the bosoms of the dwellers in this darkest of the world's dark places it flourishes and bourgeons, aromatic and beautiful, tracing on the dull, drab background of inconsequent lives golden schemes of woven colour, healing with its balm of fragrance the scars that unkind memories have left, so that every bruised, numbed heart is the better for its burden.

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Even the starved heart of Contrairy Mary was lighter, though the scarce unfolded bud of romance that sprung into being in the springtime of her sorry youth drooped sadly under the bitter saltness of her tears.

She was called Contrairy Mary because her nature was so closely akin to that of the heroine of a popular nursery-rhyme.

She was a big-jawed, dull-eyed girl with no charms of manner or graces of form to recommend her to the notice of any eligible young man. She had been a sack and bag maker in Liverpool until her father, falling a victim to "Roger"—the local name for the fœtid chlorine gas which is pumped on to slaked lime to make bleaching powder —was bereft of the use of his lower limbs, and must perforce lie idle for the remainder of his days; and then she had to return home and eke out a livelihood for herself and her helpless sire—she had no mother—by washing and mending the heavy woollen clothes and mufflers of the beer-sodden, death-ridden alkali workers. It was a hard life, and the path she trod seemed to lead to a rayless future. But she did not complain. With the wondrous sweet patience of women which passeth man's understanding she did what work was to her hand, and waited—and prayed, perhaps—and hoped.

And at last it would seem that she had her reward, for a man fell in love with her. She knew that this was so because he passed and re-passed her door so frequently and so needlessly, and always said, with a wide, shamefaced smile revealing his toothless gums: "I see thee, Mary, standin' theer."

He was a salt-cake man who toyed all day with vitriol in a private hell that he shared with two mates at the Shoonah Chemical Works, and whose body threw off fumes of hydrochloric gas and chloride of manganese in little gusty whiffs of a choking pungency as he strode along the puddled side-walk on his homeward way.

But if, in Widnes, a salt-cake man be not downright hideous, then he is accounted handsome; and Joe Walters, as he was named, had all his limbs and even a coronal of fair, curling hair crisping about his hollow brow. He

was, moreover, a big man, and upright, and free-stepping. And he earned a fair wage at the Works, drawing the black ash and turning the salt, eight hours a day, at the fiery maw of the deadly revolving furnaces.

So that Contrairy Mary was well pleased with her bashful admirer.

There was that in his eyes—a look of glad interest in her—which she found it hard to meet without thrilling and flushing. It sent her indoors with flaming cheeks and a light on her face that kindled it to an unaccustomed evanescent beauty. And she knew—she knew!—that he was hers as well as she knew that she was his whenever he cared and dared to claim her. But there was a great wall of diffidence between them; and until that invisible barrier could be broken down their intimacy could not advance beyond the nodding, chaffing phase.

It was during this halcyon time that Contrairy Mary made a friend.

She had never had a friend before: there had been no room in her humdrum life for any sentimental dalliance of that sort. The friend's name was Martha. Her mother had been a blue-bed woman way up at some white-lead mills in Newcastle-on-Tyne; and Martha had been born—in Bootle—with a twisted body and a nervous affection of the spine that set her head nodding ridiculously in moments of unusual agitation or emotional excitement.

She was quite a new-comer to the neighbourhood, even as Contrairy Mary was. And perhaps it was their common loneliness that mutually attracted them—that and the accident of propinquity; for she lived at the extreme top and back of the house adjoining that in which Mary lived with her bedridden, peevish father.

The two girls first met on the crazy "leads" abutting on the rear of the houses, under their windows. Every day they climbed out on to this dingy eyrie to enjoy the smoky evening breezes. Sometimes they would sit there and chat, with a piece of sewing or knitting in their laps, until the night was an hour or two old.

That abomination of desolation which formed the landscape lay outspread all about them, under their unheeding

gaze. A dreary, weary outlook: an outlook bleak and unpromising as their own life-prospects. It was all a tangle of iron gear: girders and wheels and cranes and swinging gangways above a cat's-cradle of railway lines, and grotesquely diversified by lofty smoke shafts and strange shapes of domed towers like Moslem mosques, and mighty swart masses of masonry looming huge and dark under a pale pearly glare of gaseous vapour.

The open sewers flashed prismatic gleams to the star-dusted, moon-bathed sky. Barges lay aslant on the ooze of the canal banks like gigantic sleeping saurians, showing red, pulsing flares in the velvety gloom. But there was none of that infernal beauty, hectic and Doréesque, which redeems the frank unsightliness of most other teeming hives of industry by night. The chimneys poured out only thin pale wreaths of smoke to obscure the heavens. There was no ruddy, fitful glow of fire to puncture or enliven the solid, opaque blackness of the huddled sheds and factories.

Their friendship was barely a fortnight old when Contrairy Mary, one warm still night in the summer-time, confided her romance to Martha. It was odd to hear the faltering, shy words that fell from the coarse lips, and to contrast their spirit and tone with the heavy-jawed, expressionless face of her who uttered them. From motives which she could not have defined to herself—but they arose out of the universal feminine desire to reserve one morsel of its most cherished secrets for private delectation—Contrairy Mary suppressed the name of her admirer. Martha listened to her confession with rapt, eager interest.

"Ah, Mary, an' I'm right glad as it's like that wi' thee, too," she said.

Contrairy Mary started, surprised. She was sitting in the shadow, against a great black stack of crooked chimneys belching out a cloud of smoke that veiled her face from the light of the sky.

"I reckon as 'ee thought," said Martha, her poor head nodding violently, "as a poor, crippled, dodderin' thing like I be aren't no right to ha' aught to do wi' love and sech?"

"Nay, Martha. I reckon as 'ee ought to be loved, now, better'n a many gals, d'ye see, on 'count o' thy affliction," replied Contrairy Mary awkwardly.

Martha regarded her with wistful eyes. "Aw the same," said she slowly, " 'ee canna rightly fancy a chap carin' for Oi, canst 'ee, noo?"

"Ay, but I can jest that," was the earnest rejoinder. "For thou'st a rare sweet face like—so kind it is an' nice an' all. I reckon as a chap might go a long way further and find a sight worse lass than thou be'st!"

Martha smiled tremulously. "That be only what thou say'st. But it be right good o' thee to say it, aw the same, Mary."

"Tell me aboot thy sweetheart," whispered Mary.

"Ay, but can I? For he be—no doubt of it—the best an' the straightest lad in aw the world!"

"In coorse."

"Ay, but he be that!"

"So be mine."

"Then God ha' made two on him, that's aw."

"What be his name?" asked Mary.

The answer fell clear as a jewel falling into the clear depths of a fathomless pool: "Joe Walters."

There was a long pause, then Mary repeated softly: "Joe . . . Walters."

"Joe being short for Joseph," murmured Martha dreamily.

"Short for Joseph," Mary echoed.

"What be thy lad's name? Thou'st never told me that," said Martha.

"It——it don't matter aboot him," was the hasty reply. "Tell me aboot——Joe—short for Joseph—first. Is he ——do 'ee love 'ee true, now?"

Martha's head bobbed spasmodically as she blinked her eyes and sniffed.

"Ay, he used to," said she. "But he——he ha' cooled off——like——a bit——lately. I axed un aboot it, I did, a day or two gone, an' he toold me as he ha' got his eye on another lass. I don't knaw who t' hussy be, but I'd like to tear the eyes out on her, so I would. I toold un

as mooch, an' he seemed fairly put out wi' me. 'Mebbe she won't ha' me,' he sez. 'I ha'n't axed her, not yet,' he sez. 'What'll 'ee do if she wunna ha' thee?' I sez. 'I'll marry thee, I reckon,' sez he."

"An' wouldst 'ee marry un after that an' aw?"

"I'd do jest annything to get Joe," snivelled Martha. " 'Tis hard to be a makeshift, but I reckon as I could bide e'en that——to get un."

"I'd ne'er put up wi' the like o' that myself," said Mary hoarsely.

"Ay, but you be different!" cried Martha. "There be a plenty o' chances for thee. And mebbe 'ee be'n't as fond-like o' thy lad as I be o' Joe." She wiped her eyes. "It do seem crool hard!" she whimpered. "I ha' little enow to make me happy, God above knaw'st. An' now it do seem as if I be gooin' to lose Joe! I can't tell what I'll do. For she be sure to have un. Nawbuddy could help a-lovin' Joe. I always did fear as he were too good for Oi."

She bowed her head on her hands and wept. Contrairy Mary, her fingers tightly interlocked, sat motionless, her face lifeless as a death-mask. Presently Martha looked up.

"You never would believe how I ha' cried aboot it," she said. "Every night I lay a-thinkin' on un. I only come to live here so as to be nigher to un. An' he ha' only come once to see me since e'er I come. An' once he used to come every day."

Contrairy Mary shifted restlessly on her uneasy seat.

"Don't 'ee fret now, Martha," said she. " 'Twill aw come right for 'ee."

"How can I help it? You don't rightly knaw. Oh, it do seem crool 'ard!"

Contrairy Mary rose unsteadily and went and laid her hand on Martha's head.

" 'Twill aw come right for 'ee, Martha," she repeated, and stooped suddenly and kissed her weeping friend on the forehead. Then, with a hasty "Good night!" she climbed back into her own room and pulled down the window.

She dropped on her bed and lay there, looking with wide, unseeing eyes at the dingy ceiling.

For half an hour she lay there; and then she heard the hoot of a steam-horn, announcing that the day-shift at the Shoonah Chemical Works was over. She rose and tired her abundant hair, and donned her best Sunday frock. She went down to the front door and stood there, waiting. The alkali hands were pouring in a black stream across the end of Grey Foot Street. Presently one man detached himself from the crowd and bore down erratically upon her.

As he came within speaking range he halted.

"Ah, I see thee, Mary, standin' theer!" he chuckled boorishly.

She lifted her broad chin stiffly. "Be a sight too free, Muster Walters," said she.

He stared at her in blank amaze.

"Why, what be the matter wi' thee, lass?" he cried. "Hast done aught to put thee oot?"

"Mebbe. Mebbe not. But my——my cha-ap——"

"Thy chap! Never knaw'd——"

"Nor axed me, neether. But I ha', d'ye see? An' I reckon he'll fetch thee a lick o' the lug if thou comest it wi' me, now. Thou'd better 'op it!"

And she went in and slammed the door in his face.

# THE MAYOR'S DOVECOTE[1]

By SIR A. T. QUILLER-COUCH

(From *Cassell's Winter Annual*)

IN the first quarter of the nineteenth century there lived at Dolphin House, Troy, a Mr. Samuel Pinsent, ship-chandler, who by general consent was the funniest fellow that ever took up his abode in the town. He came originally from somewhere in the South Hams, but this tells us nothing, for the folk of the South Hams are a decent, quiet lot, and you might travel the district to-day from end to end without coming across the like of Mr. Pinsent.

He was, in fact, an original. He could do nothing like an ordinary man, and he did everything jocosely, with a wink and a chuckle. To watch him, you might suppose that business was a first-class practical joke, and he invariably wound up a hard bargain by slapping his victim on the back. Some called him Funny Pinsent, others, The Bester. Few liked him. Nevertheless he prospered, and in 1827 was chosen mayor of the borough.

In person Mr. Pinsent was spare and diminutive, with a bald head, a tuft of badger-grey hair over either ear, and a fresh-coloured clean-shaven face, extraordinarily wrinkled about the mouth and at the corners of the eyes, which twinkled at you from under a pair of restless stivvery eyebrows. You had only to look at them and note the twitch of his lips to be warned of the man's facetiousness.

Mr. Pinsent's office—for he had no shop-front, and indeed his stock-in-trade was not of a quality to invite inspection—looked out upon the Town Square; his back premises upon the harbour, across a patch of garden terminated by a low wall and a blue-painted quay door. I call it a

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garden because Mr. Pinsent called it so; and, to be sure, it boasted a stretch of turf, a couple of flower-beds, a flagstaff, and a small lean-to greenhouse. But casks and coils of manila rope, blocks, pumps and chain-cables encroached upon the amenities of the spot—its pebbled pathway, its parterres, its raised platform overgrown with nasturtiums where Mr. Pinsent sat and smoked of an evening and watched the shipping; the greenhouse stored sacks of ship-bread as well as pot plants; and Mrs. Salt, his housekeeper (he was unmarried), had attached a line to the flagstaff and aired the washing thereon.

But the pride of the garden was its dovecote, formed of a large cider barrel on a mast. The barrel was pierced with pigeon-holes and fitted with ledges on which the birds stood to preen themselves. Mr. Pinsent did not profess himself a fancier. His columbarium—a mixed collection of fantails and rocksters—had come to him by a side-wind of business, as offset against a bad debt; but it pleased him to sit on his terrace and watch the pretty creatures as they wheeled in flight over the harbour and among the masts of the shipping. They cost him nothing to keep, for he had always plenty of condemned peas on hand, and they multiplied in peace at the top of their mast, which was too smooth for any cat to climb.

One summer's night, however, about midway in the term of his mayoralty, Mr. Pinsent was awakened from slumber by a strange sound of fluttering. It came through the open window from the garden, and almost as he sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes it warned him that something serious was amiss with his dovecote. He flung off the bedclothes and made a leap for the window.

The night was warm and windless, with a waning moon in the east, and as yet no tremble of the dawn below it. Around the foot of the dovecote the turf lay in blackest shadow; but a moon-ray, over-topping the low ridge of Mr. Garraway's back premises (Mr. Pinsent's next-door neighbour on the left), illuminated the eastern side of the barrel, the projecting platform on which it rested, and a yard or more of the mast, from its summit down—or, to be accurate, it shed a pale radiance on a youthful figure clinging there by

its legs, and upon a hand and arm reaching over the platform to rob the roost.

"You infernal young thief!" shouted Mr. Pinsent.

As his voice broke upon the night across the silent garden the hand paused suddenly in the act of dragging forth a pigeon which it had gripped by the neck. The bird, almost as suddenly set free, flapped across the platform, found its wings and scuffled away in flight. The thief—Mr. Pinsent had been unable to detect his features—slid down the mast into darkness. And the darkness, a moment later, became populous with whispering voices and the sound of feet stealing away towards the yet deeper shadow of Mr. Garraway's wall.

"Who goes there!" challenged Mr. Pinsent again. "Villains! Robbers! You just wait till I come down to you! I've a gun here, by George! and if you don't stand still there and give me your names—"

But this was an empty threat. Mr. Pinsent, though nothing of a sportsman, did indeed possess a gun, deposited with him years ago as security against a small loan. But it hung over the office chimney-piece downstairs, and he could not have loaded it even if given the necessary powder and shot. Possibly the boys guessed this. At any rate they made no answer.

Possibly, too—for a white nightcap and nightshirt were discernible in almost pitchy darkness—they saw him strut back from the window to slip downstairs and surprise them. Mr. Pinsent paused only to insert his feet into a pair of loose slippers, and again, as he unbolted the back door, to snatch a lantern off its hook. Yet by the time he ran out upon the garden the depredators had made good their escape.

He groped inside the lantern for the tinder-box which lay within, handy for emergencies; found it, and kneeling on the grass plot beside the mast struck flint upon steel. As he blew upon the tinder and the faint glow lit up his face and nightcap, a timorous exclamation quavered down from one of the upper windows.

"Oh, sir! Wha—whatever is the matter?" It was the voice of Mrs. Salt, the housekeeper.

For a moment Mr. Pinsent did not answer. In the act of thrusting the brimstone match into the lantern his eye had fallen on a white object lying on the turf and scarcely a yard away—a white fantail pigeon, dead, with a twisted neck. He picked up the bird and stared around angrily into the darkness.

"Robbery is the matter, ma'am!" he announced, speaking up to the unseen figure in the window. "Some young ruffians have been stealing and killing my pigeons. I caught 'em in the act, and a serious matter they'll find it." Here Mr. Pinsent raised his voice, in case any of the criminals should be lurking within earshot. "I doubt, ma'am, a case like this will have to go to assizes."

"Hadn't you better put something on?" suggested another voice, not Mrs. Salt's, from somewhere on the left.

"Eh?" Mr. Pinsent wheeled about and peered into the darkness. "Is that you, Garraway?"

"It is," answered Mr. Garraway from his bedroom window over the wall. "Been stealin' your pigeons, have they? Well, I'm sorry; and yet in a way 'tis a relief to my mind. For, first along, seeing you out there skipping round in your shirt with a lantern, I'd a fear you had been taken funny in the night!"

"Bless the man!" said Mr. Pinsent. "Do you suppose I'd do this for a joke?"

"I don't know," responded Mr. Garraway with guarded candour. "I feared it. But, of course, if they've stolen your pigeons, 'tis another matter. A very serious matter, as you say, and no doubt your being mayor makin' it all the worse."

Now this attitude of Mr. Garraway conveyed a hint of warning, had Mr. Pinsent been able to seize it. The inhabitants of Troy have, in fact, a sense of humour, but it does not include facetiousness. On the contrary, facetiousness affronts and pains them. They do not understand it, and Mr. Pinsent understood nothing else. Could he have been told that for close upon twenty years he had been afflicting his neighbours with the pleasantries he found so enjoyable, his answer had undoubtedly been: "The bigger numskulls they!" But now his doom was upon him.

He ate his breakfast that morning in silence. Mrs. Salt, burning to discuss the robbery, set down the dishes with a quite unnecessary clatter, but in vain. He scarcely raised his head.

"Indeed, sir, and I've never known you so upset," she broke out at length, unable to contain herself longer. "Which I've always said that you was wonderful, the way you saw the bright side of everything and could pass it off with a laugh."

"Good lord!" said Mr. Pinsent testily. "Did I ever call midnight robbery a laughing matter?"

"No-o," answered Mrs. Salt, yet as one not altogether sure. "And I dare say your bein' mayor makes you take a serious view."

Breakfast over the mayor took hat and walking-stick for his customary morning stroll along the street to Butcher Trengove's to choose the joint for his dinner and pick up the town's earliest gossip. It is Troy's briskest hour; when the dairy carts, rattling homeward, meet the country folk from up the river who have just landed at the quays and begun to sell, from door to door, their poultry and fresh eggs, vegetables, fruit and nosegays of garden flowers; when the tradesmen, having taken down their shutters, stand in the roadway; admire the effect of their shop-windows and admonish the apprentices cleaning the panes; when the children loiter and play at hop-scotch on their way to school, and the housewives, having packed them off, find time for a neighbourly clack over the scouring of doorsteps.

It might be the mayor's fancy and no more, but it certainly appeared to him that the children smiled with a touch of mockery as they met him and saluted. For aught he knew, any one of these grinning imps—confound 'em!—might be implicated in the plot. The townsmen gave him good morning as usual, and yet not quite as usual. He felt that news of the raid had won abroad; that, although shy of speaking, they were studying his face for a sign. He kept it carefully cheerful, but came near to losing his temper when he reached Trengove's shop to find Mr. Garraway already there and in earnest conversation with the butcher.

"Ah, good mornin' again! I was just talkin' about you and your pigeons," said Mr. Garraway frankly.

"Good morning, Y'r Worship!" echoed Butcher Trengove. "And what can I do for Y'r Worship this fine morning? I was just allowin' to Mr. Garraway here that, seein' the young dare-devils had left you a bird with their compliments, maybe you'd fancy a nice cut of rump steak to fill out a pie."

"This isn't exactly a laughing matter, Mr. Trengove."

"No, no, to be sure!" Butcher Trengove composed his broad smile apologetically. But, after a moment, observing Mr. Pinsent's face and that (at what cost he guessed not) it kept its humorous twist, he let his features relax. "I was allowin', though, that if any man could get even with a bit of fun it would be Y'r Worship."

"Oh, never fear but I'll get even with 'em," promised His Worship, affecting an easiness he did not feel.

"Monstrous, though! Monstrous!" pursued the butcher. "The boys of this town be gettin' past all control. Proper young limbs, I call some of 'em."

"And there's the fellow that's to blame!" put in Mr. Garraway, with a nod at a little man hurrying past the shop, on the opposite pavement. This was Mr. Lupus, the schoolmaster, on his way to open school. "Hi, Mr. Lupus!"

Mr. Lupus gave a start, came to a halt, and turned on the shop door a pair of mildly curious eyes guarded by moon-shaped spectacles. Mr. Lupus lived with an elderly sister who kept a bakehouse beside the Ferry Landing, and there in extra-scholastic hours he earned a little money by writing letters for seamen. His love-letters had quite a reputation, and he penned them in a beautiful hand, with flourishes around the capital letters; but in Troy he passed for a person of small account.

"I—I beg your pardon, gentlemen! Were you calling to me?" stammered Mr. Lupus.

"Good morning, Lupus!" The mayor nodded to him. "We were just saying that you bring up the boys of this town shamefully. Yes, sir, shamefully."

"No, indeed, Your Worship," protested Mr. Lupus, looking up with a timid smile as he drew off his spectacles and

polished them. "Your Worship is pleasant with me. I do assure you, gentlemen, that my boys are very good boys, and give me scarcely any trouble."

"That's because you sit at school in your day-dreams, and don't take note of the mischief that goes on around you. A set of anointed young scoundrels, Mr. Lupus!"

"You don't mean it, sir. Oh, to be sure you don't mean it! Your Worship's funny way of putting things is well known, if I may say so. But they are good boys, on the whole—very good boys; and you should see the regularity with which they attend. I sometimes wish—meaning no offence—that you gentlemen of position in the town would drop in upon us a little oftener. It would give you a better idea of us, indeed it would. For my boys are very good boys, and for regularity in attendance we will challenge any school in Cornwall, sir, if you will forgive my boasting."

Now this suggestion of Mr. Lupus, though delicately put, and in a nervous flutter, ought by rights to have hit the mayor and Mr. Garraway hard, the pair of them being trustees of the charity under which the Free Grammar School was administered. But in those days few public men gave a thought to education, and Mr. Lupus taught school, year in and year out, obedient to his own conscience, his own enthusiasms, unencouraged by visitation or word of advice from his governors.

The mayor, to be sure, flushed red for a moment, but Mr. Garraway's withers were unwrung.

"That don't excuse their committing burglary and stealing His Worship's pigeons," said he. Briefly he told what had happened.

Mr. Lupus adjusted and re-adjusted his spectacles, still in a nervous flurry. "You surprise me, gentlemen. It is unlike my boys—unlike all that I have ever believed of them. You will excuse me, but if this be true I shall take it much to heart. So regular in attendance and—— Stealing pigeons, you say? Oh, be sure, sirs, I will give them a talking to—a severe talking to—this very morning."

The little schoolmaster went his way down the street in a flutter. The mayor stared after him abstractedly.

"That man," said he, after a long pause, "ought to employ someone to use his cane for him."

With this, for no apparent reason, his eye brightened suddenly. But the source of his inspiration he kept to himself. His manner was jocular as ever as he ordered his steak.

On his way home he knocked at the door of the town sergeant, Thomas Trebilcock, a septuagenarian, more commonly known as Pretty Tommy. The town sergeant was out in the country picking mushrooms, but his youngest granddaughter, who opened the door, promised to send him along to the mayor's office as soon as ever he returned.

At ten o'clock, or a little later, Pretty Tommy presented himself, and found Mr. Pinsent at his desk engaged in complacent study of a sheet of manuscript, to which he had just attached his signature.

"I think this will do," said Mr. Pinsent with a twinkle, and he recited the composition aloud.

Pretty Tommy, having adjusted his horn spectacles, took the paper and read it through laboriously.

"You want me to cry it through the town?"

"Certainly. You can fetch your bell, and go along with it at once."

"Your Worship knows best, o' course." Pretty Tommy appeared to hesitate.

"Why, what's wrong with it?"

"Nothin'," said Tommy, after a slow pause and another perusal, "only 'tis unusual—unusual, and funny at the same time; an' that's always a risk." He paused again for a moment, and his face brightened. "But there," he said, " 'tis a risk you're accustomed to, by this time!"

Half an hour later the sound of the town sergeant's bell at the end of the street called tradesmen from their benches and housewives from their kitchens to hear the following proclamation, to which Tommy had done honour by donning his official robe (of blue, gold-laced, with a scarlet pelisse) and cocked hat. A majestic figure he made, too, standing in the middle of the roadway with spectacles on nose, and the great hand-bell tucked under his arm:

"O YES! O YES! O YES!

"Take you all notice: that whereas some evil-disposed boys did last night break into the premises of Samuel Pinsent, Worshipful Mayor of this Borough, and did rob His Worship of several valuable pigeons; His Worship hereby offers a reward of Five Shillings to the parent or parents of any such boy as will hand him over, that the Mayor may have ten minutes with him in private. Amen.

GOD SAVE THE KING!"

Mr. Pinsent, seated in his office, heard the bell sounding far up the street, and chuckled to himself. He chuckled again, peering through his wire blinds when Pretty Tommy emerged upon the square outside and took his stand in the middle of it to read the proclamation. It collected no crowd, but it drew many faces to the windows and doorways, and Mr. Pinsent observed that one and all broke into grins as they took the humour of his offer.

He rubbed his hands together. He had been angry, to begin with; yes—he would confess it—very angry. But he had overcome it and risen to his reputation. The town had been mistaken in thinking it could put fun on him. It was tit-for-tat again, and the laugh still with Samuel Pinsent.

He ate his dinner that day in high good humour, drank a couple of glasses of port, and retired (as his custom was on warm afternoons) to his back parlour for an hour's siesta. Through the open window he heard the residue of his pigeons murmuring in their cote, and the sound wooed him to slumber. So for half an hour he slept, with an easy conscience, a sound digestion and a yellow bandanna handkerchief over his head to protect him from the flies. A tapping at the door awakened him.

"There's a woman here—Long Halloran's wife, of Back Street—wishes to see you, sir," announced the voice of Mrs. Salt.

"Woman," said the mayor testily, "haven't you learned by this time that I'm not to be disturbed after dinner?"

"She said her business was important, sir. It's—it's about the pigeons," explained Mrs. Salt, and before he could protest again Mrs. Halloran had thrust her way into the room and stood curtsying, with tears of recent weeping

upon her homely and extremely dirty face. Behind her shuffled a lanky sheepish-eyed boy, who took up his stand at her shoulder with a look half-sullen, half-defiant.

"It's about my Mike, sir," began Mrs. Halloran in a lachrymose voice, and paused to dab her eyes with a corner of her apron. "Which I'm sure, sir, we ought to be very grateful to you for all your kindness and the trouble you're takin' and so says the boy's father. For he's growin' up more of a handful every day, and how to manage him it passes our wits."

"Are you telling me, Mrs. Halloran, that this boy of yours is the thief who stole my pigeons?" Mr. Pinsent, looking at the boy with a magisterial frown, began to wish he had not been quite so hasty in sending round the town sergeant.

"You did, didn't you, Mike?" appealed Mrs. Halloran, and Mike, looking straight before him, grunted something which might pass for an admission. "You must try to overlook the boy's manner, sir. He's case-hardened, I fear, and it goes sore to a mother's heart that ever I should rear up a child to be a thief. But as Halloran said to me, 'Take the young limb to His Worship,' Halloran says, 'and maybe a trifle of correction by a gentleman in His Worship's position will have some effect,' he says. But I hope, sir, you won't visit all the punishment on Mike; for he didn't do it alone."

"My good woman, I—I have no such intention," stammered the mayor.

"I thank Your Worship." Mrs. Halloran dropped a quick curtsy. "And so I made free to tell Halloran, who was in doubt of it."

"Yes, yes!" The mayor took her up impatiently. "Er —by the way, what age is your son?"

"Rising fifteen, sir; christened fifteen years ago last St. Michael's Day, which is the twenty-ninth of September, though little good it done him. He takes after his father, sir. All the Hallorans shoot up tall, like runner beans, and thick in the bone. Or so his father says. For my part I've never been to Ireland, but by the looks of 'en you'd say not a day less than seventeen. It seems like

blood-money, my takin' five shillin' and handin' the child over—at his tender age—and me his own mother that nursed 'en!"

Here Mrs. Halloran, whose emotions had been mastering her for some moments, broke down in a violent fit of sobbing, and this so affected her offspring that he emitted a noise like the hoot of a dog. As he started it without warning, so abruptly he ended it.

It was uncanny. It shook the mayor's nerve.

"My dear Mrs. Halloran, if you will let me have a word or two with your son—"

"Oh, I know!" she wailed. "That's how you put it. But you give me over the money, sir, and let me go quick before I weaken on it! You never had a child of your own, Mr. Pinsent—and more's the pity for the child—but with one of your own you'd know what it feels like!"

Mr. Pinsent felt in his trouser-pocket, drew forth two half-crowns and pressed them into Mrs. Halloran's dirty palm. With a sob and a blessing she escaped. He heard her run sobbing down the passage to the front door.

The boy had sidled round with his back against the wall, and stood there with his left elbow up and his fists half clenched.

"Sit down, Mike," said the mayor gently.

"Goo! what d'ye take me for?"

"Sit down, I tell you."

"Huh—yes, an' let you cop me over the head? You just try it—that's all!"

"I—er—have no intention of trying it," said Mr. Pinsent. "It certainly would not become me to administer—to inflict —corporal punishment on a youth of your—er—inches."

"Why," he went on with the air of one making a pleasant little discovery, "I shouldn't be surprised to find you almost as tall as myself! Yes. I declare I believe you are quite as tall! No"—he put up a hand as Mike, apparently suspecting a ruse, backed in a posture of defence—"we will not take our measures to-day. I have something more serious to think about. For you will have noticed that while I suspected this robbery to be the work of small thoughtless boys I treated it lightly, but now that

I find a great strapping fellow like you mixed up in the affair it becomes my business to talk to you seriously."

And he did. He sat down facing Mike Halloran across the table, and read him a lecture that should have made any boy of Mike's size thoroughly ashamed of himself, and might have gone on admonishing for an hour had not Mrs. Salt knocked again at the door.

"If you please," announced Mrs. Salt, "here's the Widow Barnicutt along with her red-headed 'Dolphus."

"Which," said the Widow Barnicutt, panting in at her heels and bobbing a curtsy, "it's sorry I am to be disturbin' Your Worship, and I wouldn't do it if his poor father was alive and could give 'en the strap for his good. But the child bein' that out of hand that all my threats do seem but to harden him, and five shillin' a week's wage to an unprovided woman—and I hope Your Worship will excuse the noise I make with my breathin', which is the assma, and brought on by fightin' my way through the other women."

Mr. Pinsent gasped and put up a hand to his brow.

"The other women?" he echoed.

"The passage is full of 'em," said Mrs. Salt, much as though she were reporting that the house was on fire.

"Ay," said the widow, "but my 'Dolphus is the guilty one—I got his word for it."

"There's Maria Bunny," persisted Mrs. Salt, beginning to tick off the list on her fingers; "Maria Bunny with her Wesley John, and Mary Polly Polwarne with her Nine Days' Wonder, and Amelia Trownce with the twins, and Deb Hicks with the child she christened Nonesuch, thinkin' 'twas out of the Bible, and William Spargo's second wife Maria with her stepchild, and Catherine Nance with her splay-footed boy that I can never remember the name of—"

"Oh, send 'em away!" bawled Mr. Pinsent. "Send 'em away before their husbands come home from work and raise a riot!" Then he recollected himself. "No, fetch 'em all in here from the street," said he, dropping into a chair and taking his head in both hands. "Fetch 'em all in, and let me deal with 'em!"

The town, when it laughed over the story next day, found the cream of the joke in this—Bester Pinsent in promising Mrs. Halloran that her boy should but share punishment with the rest, had forgotten in his agitation of mind to stipulate that the reward should also be divided. As it was, he had paid her the full five shillings, and the rest of the women (there were twenty-four) would be content with nothing less.

But it was really little Mr. Lupus, the schoolmaster, that—all unconsciously—had the last word. Trotting past Butcher Trengove's shop next morning, on his way to open school, Mr. Lupus caught sight of His Worship standing within the doorway and halted.

"Mr. Mayor, sir, if I may have a word with you? Begging your pardon, sir, but it lies on my conscience—all night, sir, it has been troubling me—that I boasted to you yesterday of my boys' good attendance. Indeed, sir, it has been good in the past. But yesterday afternoon! Oh, sir, I fear that you were right after all, and something serious is amiss with the boys of this town!"

I regret that I cannot report here the precise words of Mr. Pinsent's reply.

# THE PROPHETIC CAMERA[1]

By L. DE GIBERNE SIEVEKING

(From *The English Review* and *The Strand Magazine*)

THERE were moments in the life of Mr. Muffle when he was glad his wife was not present. She constantly upbraided him for being a "soft-hearted fool."

"We may as well put the shutters up at once," said she, "if every time I leave you alone in the shop you empty the till into the lap of the first person who brings in a piece of good-for-nothing rubbish." But then she was made of harder stuff than he was. On this particular evening he was particularly glad that she had gone off to a sale at Islington and would not be back for some time.

He was too distressed at the appearance of the miserable individual who furtively crept up to the counter to apprise with a businesslike eye the thing which the other set down before him. The miserable-looking man fumbled with one hand on the counter and said:

"What will you allow me on this?"

Mr. Muffle picked up the large old box camera and turned it over once or twice.

"What do you want for it?" he asked.

"What'll you 'llow me?" persisted the other almost inaudibly.

"Three and six," with a shrug of his shoulders, though he felt sure the camera was worth practically nothing.

"Make it five bob."

Mr. Muffle looked from the camera to its owner. He shook his head. The other's face fell.

" 'Tisn't really worth half-a-crown, by rights," mur-

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mured Mr. Muffle, thinking of his wife's return that evening.

"It's worth a good deal more than that, indeed it is," said the other. "Why, the lens alone—"

Mr. Muffle moved about uneasily and glanced at the clock.

"All right," he said suddenly, and went to his desk to make out the pawn ticket. In another moment the man had gone, and with him went five shillings which would be very hard to account for.

Luckily Mrs. Muffle was in a good humour when she returned, having bought some old china and glass very cheaply, and merely snorted with a contemptuous little laugh when she saw the camera, and pushed it out of the way among a lot of unsaleable uniforms that had come from men home from South Africa.

. . . . . .

That had been in November. Now it was spring again. The Euston Road was drying up under the hard bright rays of the early May sunlight. Mr. Muffle was standing in the doorway of his shop reading a leading article on Campbell-Bannerman in the *Daily News*. He turned when a voice from behind him called his name. His little nephew, who was staying with them, caught hold of his arm.

"Oh, uncle!" he said, "I shall be going to-morrow, and I forgot to tell you that father made me promise to be sure and not forget to bring back a photo of you and Aunt Mabel."

"Why, Charlie," said his uncle, "me and your aunt ain't had our picture took for nigh on eight years. Your father has seen all those old things."

"Ain't you got a camera?" asked the boy. "Then I could just take a snap in no time."

"Never 'ad a camera in me life," replied his uncle, peering under his hand at the clock on St. Pancras tower.

"What's that?" said his wife's voice from the gloom behind the counter. "Have you forgotten that thing you lent five good shillings of my money for last year? Might

as well say 'gave,' for all the chance there is of him ever coming back for it!"

"There you are, Uncle Robin!" cried the boy. "Let's have a look at it."

Mrs. Muffle, muttering to herself, got upon a chair, and reached into a dusty corner. Then she returned to the counter and banged the old camera down on it.

"Look out, aunt! You'll smash the works." Charlie picked it up and carried it out into the light. After blowing the dust off it he had soon pressed the knob which opened the back.

"It'll take quarter-plate," he announced cheerfully. And then, pressing the bulb, he looked through the lens at the sky.

"Looks all right," he said. "Come on, Uncle Robin, give me a bob and I'll go and buy a packet of plates at the chemist opposite."

"Making six good shillings in all thrown away," observed his aunt sourly.

Five minutes later Charlie was in the cupboard under the counter, carefully sliding the plates into their sockets as well as he could in the dark. Soon he emerged, radiant but rumpled, and ordered his aunt and uncle out into the street. He made them stand together just beneath the three golden balls.

"Put your arm round my neck, Mabel," said Mr. Muffle, with an effort at jocularity, "and pretend we're on our 'oneymoon."

"You button up your coat," said his wife severely, "and smooth your 'air a bit. Then you might look more like a man and less like a cab 'orse."

Poor Mr. Muffle wore a very chastened expression as his nephew pressed the bulb of the old camera.

"Now," said Charlie, as he pulled the knob and dropped the first plate, "now you take one of me. Me and Aunt Mabel together." So saying, he handed his uncle the camera and stood beside his aunt with a perky, self-conscious air.

Mr. Muffle pressed the bulb.

"Now I'll take one of the Euston Road," said he, as

a happy thought struck him. "I've often thought I'd like one took just from this very door. But 'ow do you shift the plates?"

His nephew showed him, and they shook the second plate down. He looked through the view-finder and saw a little man talking to a policeman in the near foreground. A hansom cab bowling along towards him, and two horse 'buses drawn up on the further side of the street. The advertisement on the side of the nearer 'bus caught his eye:

"HENRY IRVING IN 'OTHELLO.'"

He pressed the bulb once again, and, turning to the others:

"But who's a-going to develop them?" he asked.

"The chemist over the way," replied his nephew. "I asked him."

"What'll *that* cost?" demanded his aunt sharply.

"Ooo, not much."

Next morning, after breakfast, Charlie went across to the chemist, and returned in a few moments running.

"Look here!" he said, bursting into the parlour. "This *is* a go! It is a funny camera and no mistake. They've come out all wrong. It's took something altogether different!"

"What do you mean?" said his uncle, stretching out a buttery thumb and forefinger. He looked closely at the print for a few moments, and then he jumped up with an exclamation, and, pushing the boy aside, he gazed incredulously at the other two photographs on the table.

"Aunt Mabel!" cried Charlie up the stair. "Aunt Mabel, come quickly. The photos have come out mighty queer. You haven't come out at all! And uncle—"

Soon all three of them were staring in blank amazement. In the first photograph Mr. Muffle was standing against the shop by himself. On his face a placid, comfortable expression which looked completely unfamiliar to him. He had filled out, apparently, and though he looked perfectly well and happy, and very much better dressed, he seemed to have aged considerably. The cut of his coat and the

style of his collar and tie struck them as particularly odd. The name over the shop, above his head, was no longer R. Muffle, but E. Watson. Also the three golden balls were no longer to be seen. The second photograph was that of a young man of about twenty-eight, in overalls, with a large spanner in one hand.

"Why! It's you, Charlie!"

"Can't be me. And yet it *do* seem to be like me some'ow." And then, "I say!" in an awestruck tone, "he's lost two fingers off his left hand."

Of the third photograph they could make neither head nor tail at first. It appeared to be of a wide, straight thoroughfare completely unknown to them. There were a large number of odd-looking, small, square vehicles, unlike anything they had ever seen before. In the near foreground was a police inspector talking to a man in a bath chair. On the opposite side of the street there were two omnibuses without horses, on whose sides was an advertisement which stood out in clear letters:

"BEERBOHM TREE IN 'JULIUS CÆSAR.'"

"Them things," said Mr. Muffle in a bewildered voice, "looks like motor cars, but I'm sure I never seed one that shape before! And what a lot of them! 'Buses, too."

"There's the corner of St. Pancras!" cried his wife, pointing her finger at it. "But whatever's that huge building opposite to it? I never saw *that* before."

"It's the Euston Road," said Charlie.

"Where's that camera?"

Charlie produced it.

Mr. Muffle took it gingerly over to the window of the parlour. Suddenly he gave a little gasp. On the side of the camera was a circle of metal like a clock face, about two inches in diameter. So discoloured was it that it was hardly distinguishable from the faded leather round it. He rubbed it briskly with his sleeve. The other two crowded round him.

"Whatever are all those figures?" said Charlie. "And look, there's a little arrow pointing. You can move it round with your finger."

Mr. Muffle did so.

"I wonder what it's for," he said.

Charlie's face glowed suddenly with inspiration.

"Where was the arrow? What figure was the arrow against when we took the photos?" he asked in a hushed voice.

"Fourteen, I think," said his uncle. And then, "Yes, fourteen."

"Fourteen *years!*" said Charlie.

"What do you mean—years?" said his aunt quickly. "And why didn't I come out in the photos, anyway?"

Something dawned on Mr. Muffle.

"Because you're—" said he, and stopped.

There was a long pause. And then she said, looking at the photograph of her husband:

"But you look so well . . . and happy . . . Robin."

There was a step at the door. Charlie turned and saw the chemist from across the road. He was a cheerful-looking man about thirty-five with a pale moustache.

"Mind if I have another look at those photos I developed?" he asked.

The others said nothing. For a long time he scrutinised the photograph of the Euston Road. Then he picked up the camera and, opening it, he put his hand inside and felt about.

"This arrow in the disc of figures doesn't seem to be connected with anything. Nothing comes through from outside," he said at last.

"It's *impossible,*" said Mr. Muffle, with an air of finality.

"Nothing is impossible," said the chemist.

"Well, you developed them," said Mrs. Muffle, accusingly.

"But I didn't take them," said the chemist. "And what I want you to let me do is to make a few experiments myself. Now I'll go across to my place and load the camera up full of new plates, and then we'll take six photographs, turning the arrow on five figures each time. Ten—fifteen—twenty—"

"Thirty years," murmured Mrs. Muffle to herself. "I don't believe it. I *won't* believe it! To think you paid five shillings for this—this—"

The chemist returned almost at once with the camera in his hand.

"Come out in the street," he said in an excited voice.

Charlie eyed him open-mouthed. Handing the camera to Mr. Muffle, the chemist said:

"Now you take six photos of me, and turn the arrow to five the first time, ten the next time, and so on."

"Aren't you afraid?" said Mrs. Muffle.

"Not me!" said the chemist, stuffing his hands into his trouser pockets. But for all that his face was pale.

With a trembling hand Mr. Muffle prepared to do as he was asked. But his nephew took the camera from him, saying:

"You can't do it like that, uncle, you're shaking so."

After peering once quickly through the view-finder, Charlie pressed the bulb six times, dropping a plate and turning the arrow on five points between each.

"Right," said the chemist, taking the camera from him. "I shan't be long."

"Isn't there room for us in your dark-room?" asked Mr. Muffle eagerly.

"I say! Yes, *is* there?" chimed in Charlie.

"Come along," said the chemist, and they crossed the road.

"I am sure it can't be right, and I don't believe it, anyway," muttered Mrs. Muffle, turning back into the shop.

However, she was unable to think of anything else. In about a quarter of an hour she locked the front door and followed them across the road to the chemist's shop.

"Where are you?" she raised her voice slightly.

Following the sound of talking which she heard, she went through into the back of the shop. She came to a door which was shut. From the other side of this came the chemist's voice:

"And now the last one," he said, and his voice was full of emotion.

She waited in silence.

Then she heard Charlie say, "It's coming out. You're not there!"

For a long time there was only the sound of the plate

clicking against the side of the dish as the chemist tilted it.

"Yes, you *are* there, you're sitting down."

"Hooray!" shouted the chemist. "I'm sixty-five! And don't I look prosperous just?"

The door opened.

"They're fixing," he said on seeing Mrs. Muffle. "I'll show you them in a moment."

"Then it *is* true," she said quietly.

Soon they were all looking at the wet plates as the chemist held them up for a minute to the light before dropping them into clean water. Each one showed him slightly older, and in the third the name over the Muffles' shop had changed to Watson, and the three golden balls had gone. The window was full of books.

"I'm fifty there," said the chemist.

"What I want to know," said Mr. Muffle, "is what I'm doing then, if a chap called Watson has got the shop. Oh, by the way though, I'm fifty-four then. But however did I come to look so rich?"

"It won't be your own doing, you may be sure," said his wife.

The chemist held up the last three one by one.

"And see," he said at the last one, "I'm sixty-five there. I've a good mind to take another six."

"Which would be tempting Providence," said Mrs. Muffle.

"Tempting your grandmother!" he responded cheerfully. "That would only bring me to ninety-four."

"Take a dozen," suggested Charlie facetiously.

"You're a Noptimist!" laughed the chemist.

. . . . . .

That day in the parlour behind the Muffles' shop the four of them could think and talk of nothing else. The chemist was full of tremendous suggestions. At first he was all for advertising the camera's capabilities, and charging so much a head to show people in black and white exactly what their fate would be. And then, on second thoughts he came to the conclusion that it would be better to continue the experiments for a while. For, as Mr. Muffle pointed out, the camera did not really belong to them.

The chemist replied that, if ever the owner returned to redeem it, they might buy it from him. No sum appeared to him too large for this purpose.

"Of course, telling people the future . . . well, we can't do it," reflected the chemist.

"That's exactly what we *can* do," said Mr. Muffle.

"No, I mean it's illegal."

And then he went off on the most fantastic flights of imagination.

"We could take photographs of places centuries and centuries ahead, and see exactly what's going to happen. What kind of buildings . . . architecture . . . feats of engineering . . . means of transport . . . people's clothes. Why!" he cried, "we could take a photo of the end of the world!"

"Don't be blasphemous," said Mrs. Muffle. "It would go off bang as a judgment, if you did. Besides, what's all this 'we'? It isn't your camera, as I know of."

"Well, it isn't ours either," interpolated Mr. Muffle.

The chemist judiciously passed this point over.

"It's queer," he went on. "The camera shows us what we're going to become—"

"Of course the camera cannot lie," snorted Mrs. Muffle in parenthesis.

"And perhaps," continued the chemist, "the camera is going to be the means by which we achieve fortune. When we've formed the company . . . Prophecies, Limited . . . or: Forewarned Fore-armed Trust . . ."

"Second Sight Syndicate!" cried Mr. Muffle, fired by the other's enthusiasm.

The chemist got up and strode about the room.

"By a series of photographs taken according to a calculated time and place we shall be able to foretell social changes, evolutions, revolutions, falls of Governments, wars and their results. Can't you see a series of photographs taken in the House of Commons, showing who'll be sitting on what benches ten, twenty, forty years hence? How prices alter from the effect of war! By photographing shop windows with ticketed objects. If the prices on the tickets come out double—treble what they are at present,

we shall know that once again England has won a war! We shall be able to go to Prime Ministers and charge them fabulous sums for photographs of the House of Commons Register three years hence."

Mr. Muffle objected.

"What would be the good," he reasoned, "of showing anybody anything? We might show one man how he would die by the hangman's rope, but that wouldn't enable him to avoid it. If it did, the photo wouldn't be true. It would be merely a suggestion as to what might happen. We might demonstrate to any number of people the actual, precise, and detailed result of a revolution that was inevitably going to take place. Famine . . . waste . . . disease . . . rioting. But in so much as it was inevitable, it would 'ave to 'appen, and I'm sure nobody would be any better for the knowing of it. The politicians could change their way of going on as much as they pleased, but if what the camera said was going to 'appen, *was* going to 'appen, what they did would be what they would have done in any case."

The chemist waved him to silence with an exasperated sweep of the arm.

"As if those were the only possibilities," he said. "Think how we might get the whole history of the world, backwards and forwards from beginning to end!"

"The arrow won't go backwards," said Mr. Muffle. "You can only push it round one way. From nought right round to nought again. Besides which, I'm positive it ain't no good knowing the future unless it's pleasant."

"Well," responded the chemist, "we could take people's photos—at a price—and we could decide when we developed them whether their future was a happy one or not. And if it wasn't, why, we needn't show 'em."

"That would be worse than showing them!" ejaculated Mrs. Muffle. "Then they'd be quite sure it was bad, only they wouldn't know *how* bad it was!"

"Anyway," said the chemist, "whether it benefits me or not, I'm going to know all about the future. I am going to take thousands and thousands of photos. There must be lots of people with money who would be quite willing

to pay and never consider whether it would do them any good or not. Think of a photograph of New York or Paris in the year 3000! Perhaps the channel with bridges across it . . . flying machines as big as liners . . . a new kind of animal . . . or even of the Euston Road in five hundred years' time! Why, man! Only think—"

The shop bell rang.

"Run and see what they want, Charlie," said his aunt.

Charlie returned with a pawn ticket and handed it to his uncle.

Muttering that he would not be a moment, Mr. Muffle went into the shop. In answer to an excited shout, the three of them followed him a moment later.

"It's HIM! It's HIM!" said Mr. Muffle, clutching the chemist's arm.

The chemist pulled himself together.

"I've took rather a fancy to your camera," he said to the miserable-looking individual. "How'd you like to sell it me for a reasonable price?"

"I don't want to sell it," replied the other in a sad voice.

"Well," said the chemist a little breathlessly, "what would you say to five pounds? Come, now!"

"I don't want to sell it," repeated the other.

"Wouldn't you sell it—reelly—not at all?" urged Mr. Muffle, leaning over the counter with his hands clasped and his eyes shining.

"You've got my ticket," said the sad-looking man, "and here's the money. Give me the camera."

"He's perfectly right," said Mrs. Muffle in a firm voice, and she handed him the camera.

"You shut your mouth!" said the chemist. And then to Mr. Muffle: "We can't—we *mustn't* let it go! We must make him a partner or something. We must hire it. Look here," he continued, turning to the stranger, "do you know what that camera of yours will do?"

The sad-looking man turned towards them with his hand on the door.

"If you've been using it," he said quietly, "well, you've been using it, that's all. Good afternoon."

He stepped out into the street.

The offer of some vast sum framed itself on Mr. Muffle's silent lips. For a moment they gazed at each other motionless. Then Mrs. Muffle picked up the money and put it in the till. Suddenly the chemist was galvanised into action.

"I must follow him!" he shouted, and rushed to the door.

He looked wildly up and down the Euston Road, where the heavy afternoon traffic was rumbling by.

But the sad-faced man had disappeared. . . .

# THE MACHINE BREAKS DOWN[1]

By OSBERT SITWELL

(From *The English Review*)

HUGH DEARBORN was already middle-aged when I first remember him some ten years ago—but middle-aged with an unparalleled elegance, an unimpeachable style. His greying hair, his mask-like face through which peered those witty, rather wicked, eyes, his hands of carved ivory, were all made with an exquisite but rather snuffbox-like finish. This well-groomed and tailored figure, this Voltairean mask, rather too developed for the slender frame and covered with small, delicately chiselled wrinkles, formed but the very gentlemanly shell for an intense vitality out of all proportion to it; formed, in fact, the beautifully finished cabinet-gramophone case, from which sounded a wonderful but intolerable music. Not that his voice was musical, in the sense that our grandmothers used that term. It was not. His laugh never resembled a peal of church bells sounding at eventide, or a rather carelessly played xylophone, as did the elegant tremolos of various old Victorian ladies. On the contrary, his voice, touching every emotion for the necessary moment, never sunk into cloying sweetness, having, rather, that enchanting trick of putting a note in the wrong, unexpected place, and then recovering, which you find in the best modern music—find originally in Rossini's *Can-Can,* that first clear gem of modern music, and then in Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky.

The actual manner of his conversation was perhaps less modern than its content. Artists of the spoken word vary in their methods. One, whose manner I admire most

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of all, talks, argues, sinks beneath the logical waters, is on the point of drowning, but as he touches the ocean bottom finds some new pearl, and swiftly brings it to the surface; his is an absolute reliance on his own brain and tongue, never afraid to risk all on an absurd argument, never fearing to sink, knowing always that he will find a new treasure. But Hugh's system is different, formal; it is as the Garden of Versailles compared with that of Hampton Court, stiff, mathematic, well ordered; his voice a terrible instrument, his art one that dies but never surrenders.

From the first Hugh Dearborn possessed a peculiar interest for me—an interest roused by some apparent contradictions in his character. Here was this exquisite shell, the fruit of fifty or sixty years of toil but an instrument for an hour's conversation—conversation that like a flower blossoms and then dies, a mule-like art without hope of progeny. Usually the artist is led on by a desire for immortality or perhaps fired by a craving for money, but here was a real case of "Art for Art's sake." The best Hugh could hope for was an invitation to dinner, but the very perfection of his conversational technique, the very insistence and monopoly of his great art often tended to prevent his humble end.

And this art itself, unpremeditated and yet such a technical achievement, surely could not flower on the barren air without any but purely physical preparation? Then again, after Hugh's performance of the new Symphony at the luncheon table, I once heard a rather unkind friend say to him, "Really, Hugh, you ought to put it in a book!" And this made me wonder why he had never employed these gifts in some other, more permanent, form. And how much longer, in any case, could this delicate, ageing instrument stand the ceaseless wear and tear of such a vitality?

Thus, from the first, Dearborn interested me and I collected information about him. It was certainly a mysterious life. A friend of mine, I found out, had met him originally in the garden of Walter Pater. I pictured the scene. To us children of sadder and wiser days, the eighties of the last century seem a halcyon but ever so distant age; Alfred Lord Tennyson ever so much more distant than King

Alfred burning the cakes; the young manhood of Mr. Arthur Balfour ever so much remote, more legendary, than the youth of King Arthur or the Quest of the Holy Grail. A halcyon time indeed, with spring always in the warm crystal-clear air; with the laburnums, the lilacs, the lobelias and copper beeches in a perpetual riot of unsubdued and unbridled colour. There was a continual movement and sparkle in the lives of the well-to-do. Poet Laureates still wrote quite successful odes to members of the reigning Family, who were then of greater interest to their subjects than professional cricket or the doped death of Miss Flossie Highfly. The county families were yet safely out of the way, secure in their distant tea-bound mansions, busy killing the beasts of the field, the birds of the air. Riches were still respectable, the rise of a millionaire was yet a romance. On the other hand, you could be poor without being thought insane, and the silver épergne was gradually retiring into the lodging house homes of Bloomsbury. Shepherd's Hotel would soon be open in Cairo (or was it already?), and we were on the verge of an optimistic young Imperialism that would grow to a climax with Kipling and Lady Butler. And, to those who liked it, there was a pleasant stir in the world of art. Painting and prose were both stretching themselves after a long sleep that had only been broken by the short pre-Raphaelite nightmare. This was the time of the Neo-Greek; white marble mantelpieces, Alma Tadema, the prose of John Addington Symonds, the drawings of Du Maurier and Frank Miles, all were supposed, rather vaguely, to recall, to equal even, the art of Phidias. Bustles, bonnets, straight profiles, and diamond myrtle-leaves were the order of the day. For the more precious there were water-lilies, almond blossom and flowing draperies; for the very knowing, chatter about Whistler and Walter Pater.

Thus, in the garden of that old-world city, through Parnassian groves, over smooth classical lawns, that glowed, as they would have said, like sad green velvet, under weeping willows which wept more gracefully than they do now and through which there always rattled a slight fresh wind from the East, suggestive of the clattering of willow-

pattern plates, wandered our young hero, in ever so clean white flannel trousers, talented and exquisite. The old æsthete, who seldom committed himself to prophecy, leant over to my friend and said, "That young man will go far. . . .!"

From those days, alas! until the early nineteen-ten's I know little of Dearborn's career. He went everywhere, knew everyone—poets, painters, the first lady who wore "bloomers," boxers, philosophers and Channel swimmers, wasting the perfect blossom of his art on the worthy and unworthy alike. His art developed continually. His talk became something outside himself, a disembodied spirit. From a fine art it became a devouring growth, that in the end swallowed up the author of its being. He was Frankenstein, his conversation the monster . . . but a monster with charm.

To meet him was always a pleasure, to part with him the subtle torture of a thousand farewells. Perhaps Hugh himself wished to leave you, but his art forbade him. It made him linger, lead you to the longed-for terminus with a hundred little anecdotes that crucified your spirit; though regarded objectively they were round, full, delicate, and smooth as a ripe peach. But his conversation, monstrous ectoplasm that he materialised, wound round you like a serpent, bound you with a thousand octopus-like tentacles, released you for a moment, like a cat with a mouse, and then grabbed you again, draining your blood like a vampire.

Dull people used to think it funny to say "I wonder what he does when he is alone?" Others suggested (and this was to me an interesting hypothesis) that he only existed in relation to his friends and acquaintances—his conversation but the magic rope up which clambered this fabulous spinner of words, like an Indian juggler, till, ceasing to climb it, he dissolved into the void. This perhaps might account for that lingering farewell; for, when it was said, Hugh, too, would cease to exist for a while. But he was too personal, too positive for that; and, like all people of talent, as opposed to genius, he was too dated. He had little tricks, and these tricks belied his mask and

proved him to be real. That manner, for instance, of wiping his eye on entering a room, with the corner of a beautifully folded, slightly scented pocket handkerchief, as one who was still laughing at some witty conversation that he had just left, did not that betray him? Was not that conversation one that he had held with Whistler, Pater, or some other already legendary figure—was it not perhaps only a forty-year-old memory? On the other hand, it may have been a signal, like a bugle call, for focussing the attention; for Hugh, a true artist, liked to have the attention of his audience, and, if slighted, if interrupted, a strange fury gleamed from those wicked little eyes.

Like all beautiful objects, Hugh never aged, only becoming a little more worn—worn with the thin wrinkled elegance of a Chinese grotesque; but his talk became always fuller and richer. He was never silly, never dull; and again, like all *objets d'art,* though mannered, he was never really affected. Yet there was about him a quality that was sometimes a little sinister, sometimes a little sad; a mystery, certainly. But from the first, being an artist myself, I guessed that his art was a hard mistress. I have said that Hugh Dearborn knew everyone—the world, the flesh, the devil, the ass and the artist. Among his greatest friends (for his art was bi-lingual and surmounted all obstacles) was Henri Schmidt, the famous Parisian portrait painter, himself a master of conversation, in an age of which he and Hugh were perhaps the only two high exponents of that art. Schmidt painted his portrait, and it is a masterpiece. Dearborn is presented to us sitting in an armchair, with his beautifully crinkled grey hair, his mask wrinkled and wicked, and rather over life-size, looking straight out of the picture. All his attributes are here, ring, cigarette-case, tie-pin, cane and, so to speak, the rest of the artist's equipment. This, then, was Mr. Dearborn when silence took him. . . . When he was—alone! On the exquisite mask was a smile, like that Leonardo portrayed on the face of the Gioconda, the smile which, we are told, was caused and maintained by the music of hidden flutes—and this wonderful smile of Hugh's is as surely caused by hidden music, by the dead music of his own young voice,

by remembered passages from talks with Whistler, Pater, and Oscar Wilde. This picture ranks high as a work of art, but its sadness is unbearable.

Hugh was, however, grateful to the painter for it, and many of his preambles ran: "As I was saying to an old friend of mine, who I know would interest you, especially with your real interest in, and love of, modern Art (but I expect you know him already?)—a man who really is, I think, one of the most interesting and (though perhaps I ought not to say it, for he is one of my greatest friends) amusing, but I mean really one of the most (*crescendo*) brilliant men, the painter, Henri Schmidt. . . ."

The war came and went, rolling me over, submerging me as it did most of the younger generation, filling our souls with anger, rancour and hatred, with pity and love. Mr. Dearborn, unsubmerged, began to work at other things than talk, for the first time in his life. He worked hard and usefully, translating various papers for the Government, being a master of languages as well as of language. The war did not break his indomitable spirit; he never grumbled, nor did he envy the younger men in the trenches, as did so many of our over-age patriots. He behaved, in fact, like what he was—a gentleman. Though there may have been little cracks in the foundation of his spirit, he appeared more elegant and gay than ever, and even took to dancing once more. After working ten arduous hours, with very little actual conversation, in a horribly improvised office, he would dine and then dance till five o'clock in the morning. His vitality was more amazing than ever. High above the coon-born music, above the vulgar, savage and sentimental strains, one could hear the floating "dying fall" of his voice. Never was anyone so gay, so young, for his age as Hugh Dearborn, but it must have been a strain even on that giant energy. He would go to bed at three o'clock, at four o'clock, at five o'clock each morning, in the highest spirits; but who can bear to think of him, as he slept alone and old, in his charming flat? But the next day at ten o'clock he would walk to his office, gay and beautifully finished as ever, and alas (as journalists write about royal visits) with a word for everyone.

Soon after the war I paid a visit, in search of health, to the plaster-shores of the French Riviera; and at Monte Carlo we met. Every morning at twelve o'clock, to the droning snort of a brass band, Mr. Dearborn, in white flannel trousers (oh, how long ago was that day in the garden of Walter Pater . . .!), would descend the steps on to the pink-sugar terrace. The war had altered him, and, although looking no older, he was beginning to show signs of eternal youth. But under blue skies, in this hard, trembling light, enhanced by cacti and tropic flowers, and by this sugar-icing world, his appearance took on a new quality, his voice a new tone. He became more real, his warning voice took wing, soared out to sea like the albatross in *The Ancient Mariner,* borne in, as it were, on the crest of a returning toy-wave. His essentially aristocratic finish, and even the rather tired rasp, felt more than heard, of his voice, put the population of international profiteers to shame. It would be many years before these beaked harpies could produce an article with such a finish. . . . I saw and heard a good deal of Mr. Dearborn that spring, and grew to love his conversation. My mind would wander in it, as in a forest; I would lose my path, led away by strains of unfamiliar music, and then be pulled up suddenly by some well-known land-mark, the name of Henri Schmidt, or of Durant the boxer, and in that forest I found many homely things that I little expected, and, though exotic on the whole, it was decidedly less so than the war, which at the time we conspired to consider a natural life—and much more restful.

In May I left Monte Carlo, and for nearly two years lost sight and sound of Mr. Dearborn.

Two years afterwards I was wandering about Italy with young William Erasmus the writer. It was his first visit to the Peninsula, and he was very much on the look-out for copy, though his calm, languid air, as of one dwelling on Olympian heights, was calculated to disguise the fact. But he was always watching, listening, and peering. He had, I suspect, written several Italian travel-sketches before leaving England. He was, however, a charming companion —a companion only too appreciative and receptive, his

appreciation of anything amusing or interesting that was said being made even more obvious later, and in print, than at the time. Truly we must have livened up the landscape with the necessary grotesque touch, I with my fleshy Hanoverian face and big body, William tall and thin as a young giraffe, with the small head of some extinct animal, some kind vegetarian creature that subsisted on the nibbled tops of young palm-trees in the oases—the Giant Sloth, for example! And how often, when I saw silly little jokes of mine appearing under the guise of musical or scientific articles in the weekly papers, did I wish that his character had been true to his appearance, that he had indeed resembled more nearly the Giant Sloth, instead of possessing that vast and terrible, assimilative and possessive, energy.

After leaving South Italy we visited Rome and Florence, from there exploring some of the smaller Tuscan towns. The country was in the full efflorescence of early May, only the vines were a little backward, the leaves and tendrils still looking like golden coils about to spring out and release their stored-up energy. Little hills vibrated into the distance like rings of smoke, and the foreground was full of blossom—not the impressionist drifts of colour that you find in northern Europe, but flowers of every colour, each one separate, stiff, and geometrical in design, as those in an Italian primitive, or in one of the landscapes of the Douanier Rousseau. The days grew ever hotter, and any sudden little blue wind that rose among the distant hills, and played for a moment in the flowering fields, bore an unimaginable load of scent.

One morning we reached the delightful small town of Lucca, finding our rooms in the chief hotel, which had been the palace of one of the noble families in the eighteenth century, when Lucca had been a rich and independent State. The hotel was full of large, lofty rooms with golden curls and network, the prevailing tones of the old paint being light blue or pink, the whole effect being more of that of the French than the Italian eighteenth century. The rickety iron bedstead, shabby German tablecloth, and dingy modern furniture looked very remote in

these chambers built as a background for gilded beds, rich brocades, and powdered wigs. The sounds of the street, shouting, snarling song, and shrilling bird-chatter of the market-place, were very faint at these patrician windows, lapping at them softly like small waves. Everything in the room was bright and quiet as in a coloured glass slide. In fact, the whole hotel had an indefinable atmosphere.

The town itself is a lovely one, with gardens and avenues of chestnuts, whose heavy leaves support their glowing, torch-like flowers on the thick battlemented walls that girdle it. We examined the churches, mostly Romanesque buildings of black and white marble, exotic as zebras, of a fabulous sculptural beauty, but seemingly less connected with the present town or its inhabitants than any pagoda whose blossom-like bells drip down their honey on the Chinese gardens. Yet none of the inhabitants seemed to feel the contradiction between their lives and their back-cloth. There the cathedral stood, like a zebra in the market-place, or like an elephant supporting a howdah—they paid no attention to it. In England these things are different. Any stranger stranded under the wide arches of York station for five minutes would guess instinctively the nature of the Minister, the Bishop's Palace, and even of the Archbishop himself. There is no need to explore. Anything queer will soon be tidied up, and, as they say, "put to rights." But in Italy civilisations crowd together: marble churches of the twelfth century, brick-built Gothic palaces, gilded rooms with bellying balconies, and finally the iron bedstead and newspaper, universal symbols of modern culture, cling to each other, each the concrete form of a different view of life.

Thus we explored the town, talking. Then followed an early luncheon, after which Erasmus, who during his four and a half weeks in Italy had already become more Italian than the Italians, even talking the language with such an exquisite *bocca Romana* that the Romans were unable to grasp his meaning, retired for that siesta which was to him the crowning proof of belonging to a cosmopolitan intelligentsia. He had, however, already peered into the visitors' book for copy, but found none—not even

a resident or casual Englishman in the hotel, which was, as he remarked, none the worse for that; and no doubt comforting himself with thoughts of how unspoilt was this really very sophisticated small town, he retired to rest.

The afternoon passed quickly, and the day dwindled into the dinner-hour.

For a time we walked about the brightly-lit town, but the cinemas were full, and we had seen *Lucia di Lammermoor* the previous evening, so that we returned through the humming streets to our hotel. William went to bed at ten o'clock. Half an hour afterwards he called me excitedly into his room, high, gilded, and full of dead air that magnified each sound. His lanky pyjama-clad figure and receptive ear were pressed ecstatically against a door—one which led into the next bedroom. "Who can it be? Who is it? Who is it?" he whispered. And then, quite clearly, each word taking on a greater significance in this room that seemed like a gilded tomb, I heard . . . "As I was saying only a few days ago to a man, a great friend of mine, who has, I think, really one of the most amusing and interesting personalities—a man who, I know, would delight you, with your knowledge and genuine appreciation of modern art—a really witty, but I mean to say brilliant and delightful man, Henri Schmidt. . . ."

Thus the poor tired voice dragged on, trailing away into the huge silence of the palace. Hour after hour the monologue continued, sometimes the voice stumbled and there was a weak repetition. Often the stories belonged to an earlier date, the references to those long in their coffins, and through the weak tones of an old man you could catch the fresher notes of an art whose technique had not then been perfected to such a metallic pitch. His smiling, trembling voice conjured up the applauding laughter of other days, when he had possessed a more appreciative audience than latterly. This, then, was how Hugh had talked to Whistler, to Pater; this was how. . . . But now at three o'clock in the morning the voice sank down to a slight moan. It haunted me, the stillness of the room. What was the mystery of that beautifully-finished being,

lying in that vast apartment that belonged to another age of perfected technique? Whose voices answered him in his mind, whose laughter?

Morning came to find Erasmus charmed and inquisitive, myself uneasy, not daring to break into the darkened silence of that room. No name was in the visitors' book; no one was to be seen, no voice sounded. Luncheon came, and we watched with mute inquiry.

But at about two-thirty Mr. Dearborn came downstairs, elegant and gay; his mask was rather heavy, tired, and ill-at-ease, though the detail of his appearance was as fresh as ever. But there was a curious thick dragging of his speech, an occasional twitching in the muscles of his mouth. He gave me a hearty but uncertain welcome, avoiding my name. He told me he had been rather ill, and had come here to be alone until he was better able to face the world—his world.

Then it was that I understood—realised the full tragedy of that vocal practice in the small hours. He had been pleading with his art, his Muse, his cruel mistress, to return to him, but the string was broken; she had spread her wings and left the tired old mask; the shell, though still perfect, was empty. The cabinet gramophone-case was complete and beautifully finished; but it was made for only one purpose, and there came no sound of the old music. Art is a hard mistress, mysterious in her intentions. As I left him, never, alas, to see him again, there was a slight return of his powers, and, looking at me, he said, "One spring afternoon I was in the garden of Walter Pater, walking over the lawn. . . ." And then I remembered the Parnassian groves, the weeping willow-pattern trees, the exquisite and talented youth in white flannel trousers, and the words of the old æsthete, "That young man will go far. . . ."

# THE ENEMY[1]

## By HUGH WALPOLE

(From *The Strand Magazine* and *The Metropolitan*)

AT a quarter-past eight in the morning, every working day of the year, summer and winter, little Jack Harding left his little house in Ealing for the Charing Cross Road, where he had a little bookshop. A month every year he took a holiday, but even during that month he might be said to go through the same procedure, because, wherever he might be, he woke up at half-past seven and, lying on his back in bed, went through all the stages of dressing, having breakfast, hurrying to the station, changing at Hammersmith, getting out at Leicester Square, walking up to the little shop, scolding the boy with adenoids, opening his correspondence, and entering happily on the business of the day. It was luxurious indeed to lie on one's back and take this journey, hearing the waves murmur outside one's window, or seeing the clouds pass in lazy procession, or hearing the separator hard at work in some distant part of the farmhouse. He enjoyed his holiday, of course, but he enjoyed still more getting back to work again. He loved his shop, although it made him the barest living in these difficult post-war days, and he could not be said to care very generally for books for their own sake. He was a little man, stout and round like a rolling-pin, with very small feet and hands, of which he was immensely proud. He was cheery and optimistic by temperament, loved to hear the sound of his own voice, and, although he was forty-five, was still unmarried. He enjoyed the society of ladies, but liked them in general rather than in particular. An old woman looked after

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him and his little house, cheated him and robbed him, scolded him and abused him, except when he was ill, when she adored him and took an enormous amount of trouble to make him comfortable. He had only one enemy in the world.

Now the point about this enemy was that he had seldom spoken to him. Some years ago, when he had first come to live in Ealing, he had noticed on his regular morning journey a large, heavy, red-faced man, who lived apparently in his own street, always plunged out of his door at precisely the moment when he, Harding, passed it, and so plunged apparently in order to have a bright morning conversation. In fact, it very soon became Harding's conviction that the large, heavy gentleman waited behind the dining-room curtain until he saw him approach and then made his plunge. Now Harding did not want a bright morning conversation. His mind was busy with the details of the day's work. The catalogue that he was preparing, the cheap lot of books that had come in yesterday and would, most of them, find their way into the six-penny box outside, and the chances of discovering some unexpected find that would add glory to the aforementioned catalogue: such questions as these made a morning conversation with a stranger extremely irritating, and Harding was English enough to suspect at once of the most abominable crimes anybody who spoke to him without a proper Ealing introduction.

This large man was, in Harding's view, exactly the person of whom you would expect a crime. On the first morning the large man had insisted on walking with Harding to the station, he talked in a great booming voice about the weather, about the neighbouring music-hall and a dainty little piece who was dancing there, about some shares he had somewhére, about his being a widower, about some geraniums in his back garden, about some horses, about indigestion, and about where he was going for his summer holiday. All these things before they reached the station at all. Then in the train he set next to Harding, might indeed be said almost to sit over him, and went on with a long, cheerful proclamation about potatoes and beans

and cabbages, shouting it all out at the top of his voice in rivalry with the noisy train. If there was one thing in the world that Harding detested it was talking against a train, he himself having a rather small, shrill voice which was not at its best when it was unduly raised, as he very well knew. Then this horrible man stuck closely to him at Hammersmith, marched down the platform with him, pushed past the ticket collector, marched up the other platform, and sat over him once again in the Tube. He went all the way with him to Leicester Square and would, Harding believed, have followed him to his bookshop had he not managed to lose him in the crowd. Work was spoilt for Harding that day. Whenever he tried to think clearly that man's booming voice seemed to get in the way, his large, bushy, black moustache seemed to whisk up and down the bookshelves, and his broad, aggressive chest overshadowed the customers.

Harding had not been encouraging, but nevertheless, next day, there was the man again, darting down the steps with a "Well, good morning, good morning, how are we to-day?" so that Harding, who detested to be called "we," was so deeply annoyed that he murmured that he had forgotten something, hurried back to his house again, and was twenty minutes late at the bookshop.

This was how it began, and every day now the poor little man was overshadowed by this horrible stranger. This horrible man's name was Tonks, and he had something to do with vegetables. He had no children and was thinking of marrying again, but couldn't quite make up his mind. He gave his reluctant companion most unpleasant and intimate details of his earlier married life. He had an especially disagreeable habit of putting his hand on little Harding's shoulder. The really strange thing was that Tonks seemed to have no particular liking for any other of the numerous company who went down to the City at that same hour day by day. There were, as Harding complained, any number of men who would have been delighted with Tonks's confidences, but Tonks appeared to wish to have none of them, and Harding, being a modest little man, could only explain this as a

quite definite persecution, deliberately indulged in by Tonks for his own especial annoyance.

Now the passion of Harding's life was his bookshop. He thought about it all day, slept with it all night, ate it at every meal, and was never so happy as when he was imagining wonderful plans for its future. These plans were not really of a literary kind. His vision and dream was an enormous shop containing thousands and thousands and thousands of volumes. Room succeeded room, rows and rows of bookshelves towered up into the mysterious mists of the ceiling. There were so many books that nobody knew how many there were, nor ever would know, and with this sense of size and multitude went also a keen pleasure in what may vulgarly be called "spotting the winner." Harding never went to horse-races; as he once explained to a friend, he did his horse-racing in the bookshop.

This was just at the time when there was a passion, both in America and England, for modern first editions, and Harding had a special catalogue of modern firsts of which he was immensely proud. This catalogue might have been better, and he would certainly have made more money had he gone in for quality rather than quantity, but he loved his catalogues to be large and full of important names. He had a list of modern writers, and used to mark them up and down in this list week by week according to the value of the moment. At one time it would be, we will say, Drinkwater and De la Mare who were going to win the literary stakes, and his modern catalogue that quarter would be full of Drinkwaters and De la Mares, a great many of them of no value at all, but he would put little mystical notes under the items, like "Very scarce" or "Rare in this state," and then hope for the best. Nothing pleased him so much as when somebody came into his shop, asked for some tawdry novel, and was then lured by him into a consideration of rare firsts. He loved to see them open their eyes in wide amazement as he explained to them the wonderful speculation that investing in these mysterious Drinkwaters would be, of them going up week by week, that somebody in his shop had bought two years ago a little slim Masefield for

almost nothing at all, and that now ten pounds wouldn't buy it. Ladies might be seen going from his shop with a little bundle of mysterious poets, when they had intended to purchase only a very unmysterious story to read in the train. Had this been all, he might truly be said to be encouraging a love of real literature among the masses, but unfortunately those same ladies very often returned at a later date with the same mysterious poets under their arm, expecting him very naively to give them an increased price for these same writers and being greatly indignant when they found that these books had gone down rather than up.

Nothing is perhaps more curious in ordinary daily life than the way in which somebody who has perhaps a very remote connection with ourselves and our affairs creeps in upon our consciousness and dominates it. I remember once staying with a man in a fine country house, surrounded by a magnificent park, shut off most securely from all the world, and worried almost to death by the personality of a certain butcher in a neighboring village. He didn't even get his meat from the man; he was simply conscious of him, of his red face, his stout body, his blood-stained knife, and this man interfered so seriously with his happiness that he sold his house and went elsewhere. That is an extreme case, I dare say, but we must all of us be able to remember times when we have been affected in something of this fashion.

Mr. Tonks crept in upon the consciousness of Mr. Harding very slowly. Mr. Harding could not really be said to be a very imaginative man. He had only an imagination about the possible size of his bookshop. With regard to his own daily affairs he was very practical and sensible. Nevertheless he found himself after a week or two hesitating before he took his walk to the station. Would Tonks be there springing down the steps towards him? Would his cheery laugh ring through South Ealing? Would Harding this time be ahead of him? He noticed soon that he did not move off to the station with his accustomed alacrity, that he paused a little in his bit of garden, and that once or twice he peered down the

street to see whether there were anyone there. He began to have a physical feeling about Tonks, as though he were an egg ever so slightly bad, or a bird just a tiny bit too high. He contemplated the possibility of reaching the station by some other route. He thought that perhaps it would be almost as quick to go from Ealing Broadway, but, as a matter of honest fact, he knew that it would not. Then he concocted for himself an elaborate conversation with Tonks: how he said to him, very politely, "Good morning," how they started off to the station together, and how on the way he explained very gravely but with the utmost politeness that it was quite essential for him to have absolute silence on his journey down to Charing Cross Road because there were so many business problems that only that morning hour before the morning rush could solve. He saw himself then bowing to Mr. Tonks, saying that he hoped that he understood, that no kind of offence was intended, and that if there was one person in the world with whom he would like to talk at that moment it was Mr. Tonks, but that, in fact, there must be nobody at all. Harding thought this all out very carefully, and it seemed to him that there was nothing whatever to prevent him from carrying out his desire. There was, in fact, nothing to prevent him except that the words would not come. Something tied him when he saw Mr. Tonks, just as though a seal had been placed on his lips, and this made him more irritated than ever. "I should have thought," he complained angrily to himself, "that the fellow could see that I don't want him. I surely make it plain enough." However, the fellow did not see, and Mr. Tonks became more and more amiable, more and more voluble, was ever more and persistently there.

The next stage in the proceedings was that Harding dreamt about Tonks. He was not a man who dreamt very often; only occasionally, when he had had a late supper, he fell screaming from an enormous height, and he did occasionally dream about somebody coming into his shop with a first "Pilgrim's Progress" in perfect condition, and offering it to him for sixpence, but he was on the whole most definitely not a dreamer. One night he saw Tonks

standing in his room in his night-shirt. The vision was so vivid, the smile on Tonks's face so real, the night-shirt so exactly what in real life it would be, that it was hard to believe it was a dream. "What have you come here for?" he asked, angrily. "I'm never going to leave you again," the figure replied. Poor Harding woke with a scream. Then the dream came quite frequently. There were different aspects of it. The worst was when Tonks's naked feet could be heard padding up the stairs. Then there was a pause outside the bedroom door, and Tonks's laboured breathing came like a whistle through the woodwork. Then the door slowly opened, and first Tonks's head was seen peering round, and then the whole big body came into view. Then the door was softly closed, and Tonks stood there watching. Always Harding said the same thing—"What have you come here for?" and Tonks said, "I'm never going to leave you again."

There suddenly came a week when Tonks did not appear —no sign of him at all. Harding absolutely sighed with relief. Perhaps Tonks had gone away. Perhaps he was on a holiday and would be drowned in the sea or ridden over by a motor-car. Perhaps he had committed some crime and left the country. At any rate, for a week he disappeared, and Harding was astounded and secretly irritated to find that towards the end of the week he missed him quite seriously, just because to have somebody so thoroughly to dislike seemed to give piquancy to the work of the day, but, lo and behold! there on Monday morning was Tonks again, hurrying down the steps with his, "Well, well, how are we, then, to-day?" and then going on to explain that he had had a horribly bad cold, that his throat had hurt him something terribly, and his inside not been at all the thing. On that day Harding could have killed him, and he did manage to say as they drew near to the station, "Look here, I've got to think something out. Let me be quiet, won't you?" to which Tonks, who had been sneezing hysterically all down the road, replied through his cold-invaded nose: "All right, old feller; forgive my sneezing, won't you? Terrible things to get rid of, colds."

The next stage of this affair was that Tonks's personality invaded the shop. It can only have been hysteria on the part of Harding, and he was most certainly very far from being an hysterical person, but one morning, opening the door of the shop, stepping in, sniffing as he invariably did the aroma of old decaying books, the beautiful scent of piled-up dusty volumes, it seemed to him that Tonks had followed in after him. He whisked sharply around, but of course there was no one there, but for half a moment he could have sworn that out of the tail of his eye he saw the heavy shoulder, the rough red of the cheek, the beginning of that hateful smile.

"That man's getting on my nerves," he said to himself. "I really must refuse to think of him any longer." But he could not help himself. There was something about Tonks as though he had been Frankenstein's monster of Harding's own creation. Harding, like all Englishmen, was, underneath his British exterior, a desperately sentimental man. A little of a sycophant too, something of a crawler, and the odd thing was that if he had met Tonks just a little differently—that is, on a convivial evening at the house of a mutual friend—he might have liked him very much indeed, so close are love and hatred to one another. As it was, he hated him, and every day with increasing fervour. He was perhaps working too hard, bothering himself too strenuously about his new catalogue. Perhaps he was taking too little exercise and eating things that did not agree with him. Whatever the explanation, certain it is that Tonks's shadow was always now appearing at the shop, hiding behind the counter, squeezing itself in between the covers of books, balancing itself precariously on ladders, always turning up in the most unexpected places. And then one day came the climax. Tonks did make a real appearance in the true flesh. He came in one morning about midday, sauntering in, one hand in his pocket, smiling all over his face. Harding was alone in the shop at the time.

"Well, well, how are we?" he called out. "I've caught you in your lair at last. You never would tell me where you worked, and I've had to find it out for myself."

So he'd been spying on him? Harding's face crimsoned. He had to bend over a book that he was examining to hide his agitation. Yes, he'd been spying on him, the beast!

Tonks waited a moment for a reply, and getting none went on most genially, "Well, well, I'm sure you're busy to-day. I've come in to buy a book from you."

"What sort of a book?" said Harding almost in a whisper.

"Well, it's for a young lady friend of mine, and she's taking a long journey up to the North of Scotland, and wants something to read. 'Why,' I said to her, 'I know the very man. He's a great friend of mine and very clever, and I'll ask him to advise me.'"

Harding suddenly looked up and leaned across the counter, his face pushed forward. The two men were very close to one another.

"I'm not your friend," he said, "and I'll have you know it. I hate the very sight of you. I've been wanting to tell you this a long time."

The smile suddenly left Tonks's face as though it had been snatched away by somebody standing behind him. His eyes were wide with surprise.

"Well, I never!" he said. "Do you really feel like that about me? I wonder why?"

"Never mind why," said Harding, furiously. "The fact's true, and that's enough. *You*'ve been irritating me for months, walking along to the station with me, only *I* haven't had the courage to tell you so. I should have thought a man would have seen it."

He bent down, his face still crimson, staring into his book. The puzzled expression deepened on Tonks's countenance. His whole body seemed to grow puzzled, too. His waistcoat developed new creases, his hands seemed to wrinkle. Then his great chest heaved a mighty sigh.

"It's strange," he said. "I wonder if you know anything against me? Not that there is much against me that I can think of, but it's curious because I took a liking to you. A great liking to you. Most unusually quick it was. At the very first sight of you, as one might say. I sup-

pose I'm slow to notice things, but there's never been a man I'd have liked for a friend so much as I'd have liked you. There's something about you sort of appeals to me. I suppose you couldn't explain a little?"

"No, I couldn't," said Harding, ferociously. "I just don't like you, and that's all there is about it. We're better apart, if you'll excuse me for saying so."

"Oh, I'll excuse you," said Tonks, shaking his head slowly, pulling himself together; "but it's a great pity—a terrible pity. I'm a lonely sort of man. Being a widower's a bit difficult, because, you see, if you've liked the first woman it's most improbable you're going to be pleased with the second, and if you haven't liked the first woman, why, you're off matrimony altogether, so to speak. If you understand what I mean. I'm sort of lonely in that house. I've been wanting to ask you in for weeks past. I've got an organ in the dining-room you'd love to hear. It's as good as a church. You've never seen my dog, have you?"

"No, I haven't," said Harding, "and don't want to."

"Well, well," said Tonks, slowly, "that's the end of that. I'm glad I've got the dog, though," he said, as he went out of the shop.

There began after this an even worse period for Harding, because although Tonks never actually met him now on the way to the station, never spoke to him indeed, he was always just round the corner. Harding could never pass his house without feeling sure he was hiding behind the dining-room curtain and longing to rush out and speak to him. At Hammersmith their paths were sometimes crossed, and then Tonks had a mixture of pride and pleading on his large round face that was terrible to see. Harding had now a curious sense that in one way or another he was in the wrong. Absurd, of course, but there you are. He only hated the man the more for it. The man became a proverb in his mind. When he was talking with his friends he would quote him as an instance of the depth of his feeling. "There's a man I know," he would say, "whom you wouldn't believe the way I hate, and I really couldn't tell you why. Just his face or his

smile or something. Case of Dr. Fell, I suppose. Really gives me the creeps. You might say there's nothing against him, and yet in a way there is. His being alive's against him, if you understand what I mean." And then all the friends would laugh together and say that they understood perfectly.

There was one morning a most difficult moment when Tonks came down the steps with his dog, the most hideous mongrel you ever saw, kind of a fox-terrier with a black spot on its nose, and one ear half bitten off in a dog fight. The awkward thing was that the dog leapt upon Harding as though he were an old, old friend.

"Come 'ere, Spot, come 'ere!" Tonks called out, looking extremely embarrassed, but Spot persisted in claiming Harding for an old friend. He simply wouldn't leave him alone. The two men stopped and looked at one another, and Harding had the most curious feeling, as though he would like to go up and embrace Tonks and put his hat straight. A most curious and un-British feeling, as everybody will allow, and Tonks and the dog went one way and Harding went another. Bah! how he hated that man! Why couldn't he go and live somewhere else? Nevertheless, all the way to the shop he felt ashamed of himself and couldn't settle down to anything for the rest of the day.

Three days later, about six in the evening, he was returning home. He left the shop a little earlier than usual because it was so fine and pleasant. He wanted to get into his little garden and do some digging. He got out at South Ealing Station and walked briskly down the road homewards.

Outside Tonks's house there was an agitation. Several people were hanging about and a policeman was looking into space.

"Excuse me, constable, is there anything the matter?" asked Harding.

"Gentleman been run over by a motor omnibus," said the policeman. "Just round the corner here. No use taking 'im to the 'ospital. 'E's done for."

"Done for!" gasped Harding.

"Dead as mutton," said the policeman. Harding turned white. It was as though he himself had killed him.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the policeman. "Are you a friend of the gentleman?"

"Why?" asked Harding.

"Why, because 'e don't seem to have anybody in the house who does belong. Nobody but an old woman who comes in and does for 'im and a dawg. The dawg won't leave his bed. Must 'ave been a lonely sort of life for a man."

"Yes, I am a friend of his," said Harding, suddenly, "a very great friend."

He pushed past the policeman and went into the house. There was a doctor there, an old woman crying, the dog sitting on his hindquarters at the foot of the bed and not moving. There was Tonks himself in a nice clean night-shirt with his hair brushed, looking very calm and quiet, a suggestion of a smile hovering about his mouth.

"Caught him in the stomach," said the doctor. "Instantaneous. Are you a friend of the deceased?" he asked.

"Yes, I am," said Harding, "a great friend."

"Well, there doesn't seem to be anybody else," said the doctor. "Must have been a lonely sort of life."

The old woman sobbed. "Oh, 'e was a kind gentleman," she said.

"I was his best friend," said Harding. "We used to go into town together every morning. I'll see to everything."

He did. For weeks he worked at Tonks's affairs, which were in a curiously complicated state. There seemed to be no relations. In the end, when everything was sold and all debts paid, there were a few hundred pounds, and these Harding gave to the old woman. No one seemed to question for a moment that Harding was Tonks's best friend. The action of the dog only confirmed it. He refused to go near anyone save Harding. Harding had to take him home to live with him.

"No, he's not much of a dog," he would say, "but, you see, his master was my best friend, so there you are."

And the funny part of it all was that that was true.

# BLESSED ARE THE MEEK[1]

By MARY WEBB

(From *The English Review*)

THE workhouse dozed in the Sunday afternoon hush. In the old women's room all was very quiet; only a single bee groped clumsily up and down the shut windows, seeking the free air, flowers, the sounding hives.

The gloomy July afternoon laid an atmosphere of disillusionment over everything. The sky was of the same sad grey as the workhouse stockings. Ninety-eight feet, clad in these stockings, were posed in various attitudes down the long room, swinging, tapping, crossed, or set out stilly side by side like those on tombs.

Forty-nine women, dressed in decent Sunday garments with white aprons, sat in rows on benches facing one another. Forty-nine souls, varied and strange and wistful, clamant for delight as the bee, were shut in here. All these life-stories, full of sad and joyous and wild happenings, had stopped here, and were only waiting for Death to break the final thread. Life was over. They were conscious of it, dumbly, uncomplainingly. They could not have been more completely sundered from their past lives if they had died and gone to Purgatory. But every heart, in this house that was not home, kept, clear and changeless, the picture of the home it had lost; of garden, shippen and fold; all the small, precious, sacramental things surrounding their busy lives—things they had hardly known to be precious until they were lost. For in those homes they had been individuals, centres of warmth and love. Here they were herded in a cold, almost derisive comfort; and through the long grey corridors the feet of the flame-clad, the laughter-bringer, the tear-giver—Love, were seldom heard.

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They were knitting more grey stockings to wear when the others should be worn out. Their balls of wool, all exactly the same, lay beside them, and a blue-eyed kitten, passionately in love with itself, raced up and down the lines of passive feet and bullied the stout, unresisting balls.

"I'd lief be you!" said Fidelia Thatcher, who sat—tall, emaciated, white-capped—at the window end of a bench.

"That's a wicked imagination, Delia!"

This came from a neighbour, a stout, rosy old woman.

"Cats 'anna got souls," she added.

Fidelia raised mild eyes, and her sweet, obstinate mouth took a firmer line as she said:

"Soul or no, I'd lief be that kit-cat."

Her face, tanned golden by decades of suns and snows, had the dignity of an ancient Egyptian bas-relief. And though her long upper lip, high forehead, and arched nose were intimidating, her eyes—dark and dovelike, brooding upon the furiously energetic kitten and the anxious bee—were beautiful as the eyes of a heifer. Her large hands, twisted and swollen at the knuckles from years of work, lay quietly in the white Union apron. She dreamed herself into the past. She was desperately afraid that in this place she might some day cease to believe in that past—in all the blossomy days that stretched away backwards from the day of her entrance here to her clover-scented childhood. To forget them would be like breaking faith with a lover.

One casement below and one above. What could a lone woman have wanted more? A pink rose-tree, a white rose-tree, and a lilac. These had presided over her garden. Her doves sunned themselves on the roof and paraded the tiles with soft pink feet. And, hearing the pattering enthusiasm of those pink feet above her attic morning by morning, and seeing the round cheeks of the roses pressed so confidingly against her window, she had almost forgotten that none would ever call her mother. Ah! Where was it now, that warm, scented peace? Where were those glad, laborious days when she scrubbed and rinsed the buttermits at the farm, returning in the evening with her per-

quisites of milk or pork or butter, with her small wage and her large content, and having her simple supper while dusk fell and the owls began to stir?

No conqueror of the world ever fought a harder, a grimmer battle than Fidelia's battle against Fate—against hunger and the grey defeat that was its alternative. She had "clemmed" and she had sweated. It was over now. She sat, a shade among shades, neither in Hell nor Heaven.

She rose and let out the bee. At the sudden cessation of its note the atmosphere grew more tense and heavy.

"Theer!" she said. "Out o' prison."

"Prison? What for, 'prison'?" asked a flat-faced, meek woman. "We gets our bellyful and a bed."

"What's meat?" cried Fidelia suddenly, out of her bitterness. "What's meat, with no heart to eat it? What's sleep with naught to wake for in the morning light?"

Down the benches ran a rustle and a sigh, like the wind in old, dry-leaved trees. There were murmurs.

"That's Gospel!"

"That's the righteous truth!"

"Delia's i' the right, no danger!"

With faces turned towards her as to a prophetess, they took courage to remember the days gone by. Those days, those homes, those fields, those dear lost faces shone in their souls with the peculiar lustre that mingled love and tears give to the human memory, like the carven ivories that were painted long ago in silver and gold and rich, dim enamels, and studded with burning gems.

"I mind," said one, "ah! I mind as if it was yesterday——"

At the magic of those words, "I mind," these pictures of the soul took shape and colour; from homely sentences and broken phrases, a sigh, a tear; so that to every eye in the room the dun-coloured walls were obliterated, glowing liked painted windows, garlanded with memories, hung with the little eikons of forty-nine homes. Even the flat-faced materialist had possessed a home, and she was as jealous of its recollection as an ugly woman of a lover.

The balls of sad-coloured wool became inextricably tangled, as the exultant kitten seized her happy hour.

Stockings were forgotten. Grey was forgotten. The matron was forgotten. Even the solemn festival that was to take place this very evening was forgotten.

"Cushat-doves!" murmured Fidelia in a low and dreamy voice. "I kept cushat-doves. And my gyarden most always had a flower."

"Dahlias was what our maister was set on," said a very old woman with bright blue eyes. "Ah! he liked a dahlia."

"Roses, ours fancied," put in the stout woman.

"Ah! I clem for the smell of a cabbage rose," said Fidelia.

She became mysterious, and dived into the deep pocket of her skirt.

"Look ye!" she whispered. "I couldna bide all summer without the smell of a cabbage rose. And this morning they'd left the ladder by our ward windy, being fluskered with the Bishop coming. So I crep' out and went to the matron's gyarden afore it was light and pulled this 'ere."

She held up a deep red rose amid cries of admiration and reproof.

And just as she held it up, the matron entered.

"That's the third time you've trespassed, broken bounds, and stolen" said the matron wearily. She was a kind-hearted woman, but her promotion depended on the strictness of her discipline. She was part of a machine. If it was a bad machine, she had neither time nor inclination to try to alter it.

"You'll stop away from service at the chapel to-night, and you won't go to the harvest tea at the Rectory," said the matron. Fidelia's Egyptian profile was unmoved; but tears stood in her eyes. Festivals were very few, and the harvest tea was the event of the year.

There was a sound of wheels. The Bishop! He entered with the Rector and some ladies. Everyone stood up. Only the kitten remained unimpressed.

The Bishop had thought, as he saw the workhouse from a turn of the road, that it looked dreary. He had thought that it would be good to turn the eyes of these old women to the mansions of the blest. He was really kind and sympathetic, only he was not gifted with imagination, and

he had never been an old, homesick, knitting woman on a bench.

So he said cheerfully, "Suppose we sing

'Jerusalem, my happy home!'

and then, in lighter vein,

'Home, sweet home!'"

He intended to weave these into his speech, and only to bring in mention of the consecration of the chapel towards the end.

They sang,

"Jerusalem, my happy home!"

It was a little quavering, a little irregular, but that was put down to age.

Towards the end came an audible sob from Fidelia. Then they sang,

"Home, sweet home!"

What with the memories, and the talk, and Fidelia's sob, there were a good many sniffs and surreptitious wipings of eyes.

In the last line Fidelia flung her apron over her head and wept aloud.

"Thatcher!" said the matron.

"There, there!" soothed the Bishop; and he gave her shoulder a little pat, and told her to sit down, and was sure his speech would comfort her.

But, alas! his speech did not comfort. It lacerated. It destroyed the pictures that had glowed on the wall. It hammered to pieces the little eikons of home. It built up a picture of Heaven which had in it no touch of the loved fold and cottage, but which appeared to ninety-eight alarmed eyes to be exactly like the workhouse. It was grand and large and rather pompous. It had nothing in it of firelit evenings and the bit of sewing and father winding the clock. And the more the Bishop struggled to comfort a sorrow he could not grasp, the more formal he became.

When he had finished, Fidelia emerged from her apron, and her face was that of one who has been through an agony.

So that was Heaven!

No lilac. No pink rose, nor white rose. No work. No pink feet on the tiles. Nothing but an enormous, everlasting old women's ward built of solid gold, and without even a kitten.

She looked at the Bishop and beheld him as a thief, robbing her of all hope. She had thought, without exactly formulating her thought, that Heaven would be a place with homely corners in it where the poor might dwell as of old. This man was robbing her of her dream, and it was all she had. She stood up.

"It inna true!" she cried. "It's words, words, words, a mort of words; but it inna true. And if it's true I dunna want it. It's for Squire and Rector and you. It inna for us. We'm lost our whomes; we'm gone back to school, like, after working 'ard a many years. And if the Lord, as was but a carpenter's prentice 'isself, and the Lord's Mother, as was but a carpenter's wife, canna give poor folk a bit o' comfort in the next world, I dunna want to go there."

She sat down and retired into her apron. Every face on the lines of benches was strained forward towards the group that symbolised authority, waiting for doom to fall.

"Matron," said the Bishop, "the poor thing's overwrought."

"A little—queer. A little—wandering," added a lady.

"Do not punish her," said the Bishop. "The day must not be darkened."

"But she's hardly responsible, is she?" said a guardian.

The matron, trembling with distress and wrath, whispered to the Rector:

"The asylum side?"

"Yes, yes," said the Rector in what he meant to be a whisper, "the asylum side." But he was a hearty man, used to open-air sports, and his whisper was quite audible.

The visitors went away to tea at the Rectory. Service was not till seven. The old women filed out to their mugs of tea and slabs of bread and margarine. Fidelia remained where she was—a derelict. Discipline was momentarily relaxed because she did not count any more. The asylum side! The asylum side! She could not understand it. She,

Fidelia Thatcher, the best buttermaker in the district, a self-respecting, self-supporting woman, had come to this. To-morrow she would be like a dumb beast driven hither and thither, under physical authority, bathed by attendants, slapped, taken for walks in a drove with imbeciles and lunatics—mad. No home on earth. No home in Heaven —if the Bishop was right.

"No!" she muttered. "It's lies, what he says." To-morrow, blackness of darkness; but she had to-night. She must think. She must efface herself to gain time.

The old women's room had a door opening into a paved, flowerless space which ought to have been a garden. Under the roof of the porch was a swallow's nest, hydra-headed with young. Fidelia loved to see the parent birds dart to and fro. She had watched them since they brought the first dabs of mud, until now when the young were ready to fly. She brought out a bench. No one ever came here in the evenings. They would go to the service and forget her. With folded hands she sat in her corner, so still that the birds were not afraid of her.

"Wings!" she murmured. "Wings!"

But there were no wings for her. Even if she desired to creep away and die by the roadside, she could not, for across the workhouse entrance was a locked gate. She watched the swallows flash across the slack clothes-line on which the grey stockings were dried, dart to the nest with that infinitesimal pause in which the food is miraculously transferred from beak to beak, and sweep away into the silent evening. And the swallows put into her mind what she would do. She fetched the yard broom, and raked down the nest.

"Fly!" she said. "Ye can!"

The four young swallows were gone into the soft, dove-coloured evening. From the chapel came the sound of the anthem.

"Blessed are the meek."

Fidelia, with the broom in her hand, looked at the broken house of clay.

"It inna true," she said to the depths of grey air. "They binna blessed. Them as is blessed is them as can fly."

With steady fingers she untied the clothes-line, and looped it over the beam of the porch. She drew forth her rose and smelt it. She saw again the pink rose-tree and the white rose-tree and the lilac. She climbed on to the bench.

"This minute," she said to herself, "I be a pauper lunatic by the mercy of men. The next minute I'll make a trial of the mercy of God. Fidelia Thatcher, fly! Ye can!"

And just as the concluding strains of "Blessed are the meek" sounded harmoniously, Fidelia Thatcher stepped off the bench.

# THE YEARBOOK OF THE BRITISH AND IRISH SHORT STORY JULY, 1922, TO JUNE, 1923

# ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in this yearbook.

| | |
|---|---|
| *A.* | Annual |
| *Adv. St.* | Adventure Story Magazine |
| *Beacon* | Beacon |
| *Black* | Blackwood's Magazine |
| *Blue* | Blue Magazine |
| *By.* | Bystander |
| *Cas.* | Cassell's Magazine |
| *Cas. W.* | Cassell's Weekly |
| *Cen.* | Century Magazine |
| *Cham.* | Chambers's Journal |
| *Chic. Trib.* | Chicago Tribune (Syndicate Service) |
| *Colour* | Colour |
| *Corn.* | Cornhill Magazine |
| *Corner* | Corner Magazine |
| *Cri.* | Criterion |
| *D. D.* | Double Dealer |
| *Del.* | Delineator |
| *Detective* | Detective Magazine |
| *Dial* | Dial |
| *Eng. R.* | English Review |
| *Eve* | Eve |
| *Fort. R.* | Fortnightly Review |
| *G. H.* | Good Housekeeping |
| *G. Hind.* | Golden Hind |
| *Gra.* | Graphic |
| *Grand* | Grand Magazine |
| *Green* | Green Magazine |
| *Happy* | Happy Magazine |
| *Hear.* | Hearst's International Magazine |
| *Home* | Home Magazine |
| *Hut.* | Hutchinson's Magazine |
| *I. L. News* | Illustrated London News |
| *John* | John o' London's Weekly |
| *L. H. J.* | Ladies' Home Journal |
| *L. Merc.* | London Mercury |
| *Lon.* | London Magazine |
| *Man. G.* | Manchester Guardian |
| *Met.* | Metropolitan |
| *Nash* | Nash's and Pall Mall Magazine |
| *Nat. (London)* | Nation and Athenaeum |
| *New* | New Magazine |
| *New A.* | New Age |
| *New L.* | New Leader |

| | |
|---|---|
| *New R.* | New Republic |
| *New S.* | New Statesman |
| *Novel* | Novel Magazine |
| *Out. B.* | Outward Bound |
| *Pan* | Pan |
| *Pears' A.* | Pears' Annual |
| *Pearson (London)* | Pearson's Magazine (London) |
| *Pearson (N. Y.)* | Pearson's Magazine (New York) |
| *Pict. R.* | Pictorial Review |
| *Pop.* | Popular Magazine |
| *Pre.* | Premier |
| *Queen* | Queen |
| *Qui.* | Quiver |
| *(R.)* | Reprint |
| *Red* | Red Magazine |
| *Red Bk.* | Red Book Magazine |
| *Roy.* | Royal Magazine |
| *Sat. R.* | Saturday Review |
| *S. E. P.* | Saturday Evening Post |
| *Sketch* | Sketch |
| *Sov.* | Sovereign Magazine |
| *Sphere* | Sphere |
| *Sto.* | Story-Teller |
| *Str.* | Strand Magazine |
| *Tatler* | Tatler |
| *Time* | Time and Tide |
| *Times Lit. Suppl.* | Times Literary Supplement |
| *Truth* | Truth |
| *20-Sto.* | 20-Story Magazine |
| *West.* | Weekly Westminster Gazette |
| *W. F.* | World Fiction |
| *Wind.* | Windsor Magazine |
| *Yel.* | Yellow Magazine |
| *(11:261)* | Volume 11; page 261. |
| *(261)* | Page 261 |

# ADDRESSES OF PERIODICALS PUBLISHING SHORT STORIES

## I. ENGLISH PERIODICALS

NOTE. *This address list does not aim at completeness, but is based simply on the periodicals which we have consulted for this volume, and which have not ceased publication.*

Adelphi, 18, York Buildings, Adelphi, London, W. C. 2.
Adventure Story Magazine, 34, Paternoster Row, London, E. C. 4.
Beacon, 40, Museum Street, London, W. C. 1.
Blackwood's Magazine, 37, Paternoster Row, London, E. C. 4.
Blue Magazine, 115, Fleet Street, London, E. C. 4.
Bystander, Graphic Buildings, Whitefriars, London, E. C. 4.
Cassell's Magazine, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E. C. 4.
Cassell's Weekly, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E. C. 4.
Chambers's Journal, 38, Soho Square, London, W. C. 1.
Colour Magazine, 53, Victoria Street, London, S. W. 1.
Corner Magazine, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E. C. 4.
Cornhill Magazine, 50a Albemarle Street, London, W. 1.
Country Life, 20, Tavistock Street, Strand, London, W. C. 2.
Criterion, 17, Thavies Inn, London, E. C. 1.
Detective Magazine, Amalgamated Press, Farringdon Street, London, E. C. 4.
Empire Review, Macmillan & Co., Ltd., St. Martin's Street, London, W. C. 2.
English Review, 18, Bedford Square, London, W. C. 1.
Eve, Great New Street, London, E. C. 4.
Fortnightly Review, 11, Henrietta Street, London, W. C. 2.
Gaiety, 10, Adam Street, London, W. C. 2.
Golden Hind, Chapman and Hall, 11, Henrietta Street, London, W. C. 2.
Grand Magazine, 8-11, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W. C. 2.
Graphic, Graphic Buildings, Whitefriars, London, E. C. 4.
Green Magazine, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E. C. 4.
Happy Magazine, 8, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W. C. 2.
Home Magazine, 8-11, Southampton Street, London, W. C. 2.
Hutchinson's Magazine, 34-36, Paternoster Row, London, E. C. 4.
Illustrated London News, 172, Strand, London, W. C. 2.
Illustrated Review, 9, East Harding Street, London, E. C. 4.
John o' London's Weekly, 8-11, Southampton Street, London, W. C. 2.
London Magazine, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E. C. 4.

London Mercury, Windsor House, Bream's Buildings, London, E. C. 4.
Manchester Guardian, 3, Cross Street, Manchester.
Nash's and Pall Mall Magazine, 1, Amen Corner, Paternoster Row, London, E. C. 4.
Nation and Athenaeum, 10, Adelphi Terrace, London, W. C. 2.
New Age, 38, Cursitor Street, Chancery Lane, London, E. C. 4.
New Leader, 2, Carmelite Street, London, E. C. 4.
New Magazine, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E. C. 4.
New Statesman, 10, Great Queen Street, Kingsway, London, W. C. 2.
Novel Magazine, 18, Henrietta Street, London, W. C. 2.
Outward Bound, Edinburgh House, 2, Eaton Gate, London, S. W. 1.
Pan, Long Acre, London, W. C. 2.
Pearson's Magazine, 17, Henrietta Street, London, W. C. 2.
Premier, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E. C. 4.
Queen, Bream's Buildings, London, E. C. 4.
Quest, 21, Cecil Court, Charing Cross Road, London, W. C. 2.
Quiver, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E. C. 4.
Red Magazine, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E. C. 4.
Romance, Long Acre, London, W. C. 2.
Royal Magazine, 17, Henrietta Street, London, W. C. 2.
Saturday Review, 10, King Street, Covent Garden, London, W. C. 2.
Sketch, 172, Strand, London, W. C. 2.
Sovereign Magazine, 34, Paternoster Row, London, W. C. 2.
Sphere, Great New Street, London, E. C. 4.
Story-Teller, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E. C. 4.
Strand Magazine, 8-11, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W. C. 2.
Tatler, 6, Great New Street, London, E. C. 4.
Time and Tide, 88, Fleet Street, London, E. C. 4.
Truth, 10, Bolt Court, Fleet Street, London, E. C. 4.
20-Story Magazine, Odhams Press, Ltd., Long Acre, London, W. C. 2.
Westminster Gazette (Weekly) Tudor House, Tudor Street, London, E. C. 4.
Windsor Magazine, Warwick House, Salisbury Square, London, E. C. 4.
Yellow Magazine, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E. C. 4.

## II. AMERICAN PERIODICALS

Ace-High Magazine, 799 Broadway, New York City.
Adventure, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.
Ainslee's Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.
All's Well, Gayeta Lodge, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
American Boy, 142 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit, Michigan.
American Hebrew, 19 West 44th Street, New York City.
American Magazine, 381 Fourth Avenue, New York City.
American-Scandinavian Review, 25 West 45th Street, New York City.
Argosy All-Story Weekly, 280 Broadway, New York City.
Asia, 627 Lexington Avenue, New York City.
Atlantic Monthly, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Mass.

Black Mask, 25 West 45th Street, New York City.
Blue Book Magazine, 36 South State Street, Chicago, Ill.
Bookman, 244 Madison Avenue, New York City.
Breezy Stories, 112 East 19th Street, New York City.
Brief Stories, 714 Drexel Building, Philadelphia, Pa.
Broom, 3 East 9th Street, New York City.
Catholic World, 120 West 60th Street, New York City.
Century, 353 Fourth Avenue, New York City.
Chicago Tribune, Chicago, Ill.
Christian Herald, Bible House, New York City.
Clay, 3325 Farragut Road, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Collier's Weekly, 416 West 13th Street, New York City.
Cosmopolitan Magazine, 119 West 40th Street, New York City.
Delineator, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.
Designer, 12 Vandam Street, New York City.
Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.
Dial, 152 West 13th Street, New York City.
Double Dealer, 204 Baronne Street, New Orleans, La.
Everybody's Magazine, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.
Extension Magazine, 223 W. Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Ill.
Follies, 25 West 45th Street, New York City.
Freeman, 32 West 58th Street, New York City.
Gargoyle, 7, rue Campagne-Premiére, Paris, France.
Good Housekeeping, 119 West 40th Street, New York City.
Harper's Bazar, 119 West 40th Street, New York City.
Harper's Magazine, Franklin Square, New York City.
Hearst's International Magazine, 119 West 40th Street, New York City.
Holland's Magazine, Dallas, Texas.
Jewish Forum, 5 Beekman Street, New York City.
Ladies' Home Journal, Independence Square, Philadelphia, Pa.
Liberator, 34 Union Square, East, New York City.
Little Review, 24 West 16th Street, New York City.
Live Stories, 35 West 39th Street, New York City.
McCall's Magazine, 236 West 37th Street, New York City.
McClure's Magazine, 80 Lafayette Street, New York City.
MacLean's Magazine, 143 University Avenue, Toronto, Canada.
Magnificat, Manchester, N. H.
Mediator, 2316 Lincoln Ave., Chicago, Ill.
Menorah Journal, 167 West 13th Street, New York City.
Metropolitan Magazine, 1926 Broadway, New York City.
Midland, 3415 Iowa Street, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Modern Priscilla, 85 Broad Street, Boston, Mass.
Modern Review, Winchester, Mass.
Munsey's Magazine, 280 Broadway, New York City.
New Republic, 421 West 21st Street, New York City.
Open Road, 248 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass.
Our World, 9 East 37th Street, New York City.
Outlook, 381 Fourth Avenue, New York City.
Pearson's Magazine, 34 Union Square, New York City.

People's Home Journal, 76 Lafayette Street, New York City.
People's Popular Monthly, 801 Second Street, Des Moines, Iowa.
Pictorial Review, 216 West 39th Street, New York City.
Popular Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.
Prairie, 368 Sixth Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
Queen's Work, 626 North Vandeventer Avenue, St. Louis, Mo.
Red Book Magazine, North American Building, Chicago, Ill.
Reviewer, 809½ Floyd Avenue, Richmond, Va.
Saturday Evening Post, Independence Square, Philadelphia, Pa.
Saucy Stories, 25 West 45th Street, New York City.
Scribner's Magazine, 597 Fifth Avenue, New York City.
Sea Stories Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.
Secession, 1361 Forty-Sixth Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Short Stories, Garden City, Long Island, N. Y.
Smart Set, 25 West 45th Street, New York City.
Snappy Stories, 35 West 39th Street, New York City.
Sunset, 460 Fourth Street, San Francisco, Cal.
Telling Tales, 799 Broadway, New York City.
10-Story Book, 538 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.
To-day's Housewife, Cooperstown, N. Y.
Top-Notch Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.
Wave, 2103 North Halsted Street, Chicago, Ill.
Wayside Tales, 6 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill.
Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.
Woman's Home Companion, 381 Fourth Avenue, New York City.
Woman's World, 107 South Clinton Street, Chicago, Ill.
Young's Magazine, 112 East 19th Street, New York City.

# THE BEST BRITISH SHORT STORIES

## JULY 1, 1922, TO MAY 31, 1923

NOTE. *Only stories by British and Irish authors are listed. Those reprinted in the present volume are indicated by an asterisk.*

ARLEN, MICHAEL.
Ancient Sin. Pan. May. (42.)
Gentleman Walks in a Garden of Tulips. Tatler. Dec. 20, '22. (86:504.)
Hunter After Wild Beasts. Hut. May. (8:449.)
Loquacious Lady of Lansdowne Passage. Tatler. Dec. 13, '22. (86:456.)
Luck of Captain Fortune. Tatler. Jan. 3. (87:38.)
Man With the Broken Nose. Str. March. (65:243.)
Other People's Freedom. Roy. May. (8.)
*Red Antony. Sketch. Dec. 25, '22. (41.) (Reprinted as "The Smell in the Library.")
Shameless Behaviour of a Lord. Tatler. Nov. 29, '22. (86:348.)

AUMONIER, STACY.
Accident of Crime. Roy. Oct., '22. (505.)
Last Night. Hut. Aug., '22. (7:153.)
*Miss Bracegirdle Does Her Duty. Str. Sept., '22. (64:205.); Pict. R. Sept., '22. (10.)
Octave of Jealousy. Str. Nov., '22. (64:422.); Pict. R. Nov., '22. (12.)
One Thing Leads to Another. Str. Jan. (65:40.)
Possessive Sense. Roy. May. (65.)
Second Subject. John. Dec. 9, '22. (8:347.)
William's Narrow Squeak. Str. May. (65:508.)

AUSTIN, F. BRITTEN.
Under the Lens. Pears' A. (18.)

BAX, CLIFFORD.
*Queer Fellow. Beacon. Aug., '22. (1:711.)

BECK, L. ADAMS.
Dead Clew. Pop. March 7. (88.)

BENNETT, ARNOLD.
Last Love. Sto. April. (56.); Hear. March. (70.)
Mr. Jack Hollins and Destiny. Nash. Aug., '22. (69:501.)

BENSON, EDWARD FREDERICK.
Roderick's Story. Hut. May. (8:494.)

BLACKWOOD, ALGERNON.
Dance of Death. Pearson (N. Y.). Aug., '22. (32.)
Genius. West. July 15, '22. (16.)
Tongues of Fire. Eng. R. April. (36:317.)

BERESFORD, J. D.
Philosophy of Mr. Punch. L. Merc. July, '22. (6:247)
Trap Without a Bait. L. Merc. Dec., '22. (7:145.)
BOWEN, MARJORIE.
Tarnished Mirror. Grand. May. (245.)
BOYD, D. F.
*Melancholy Adventure. Man. G. May 23. (12.)
BRIGHOUSE, HAROLD.
Insignificant. Man. G. May 28. (14.)
BULLETT, GERALD.
*Mole. L. Merc. May. (8:15.)
BURKE, THOMAS.
*Black Country. Lloyd. Dec., '22. (34:1465.)
CAINE, WILLIAM.
Cure for Shyness. Wind. Sept., '22. (372.)
CHESTERTON, GILBERT KEITH.
House of the Peacock. Nash. July, '22. (69:454.)
Temple of Silence. Sto. Aug., '22. (545.)
Vengeance of the Statue. Sto. Oct., '22. (59.)
COPPARD, ALFRED EDGAR.
*Alas, Poor Bollington! Sat. R. Oct. 14, '22. (134:542.)
Devil In the Churchyard. Sat. R. Aug. 26, '22. (134:316.)
Luxury. Sat. R. July 22, '22. (134:148.)
Poor Man. Dial. Feb. (74:121.)
Simple Simon. D. D. March-April. (5:71.)
Wife of Ted Wickham. Sat. R. Feb. 10. (135:191.)
"CROMPTON, RICHMAL." (R. C. LAMBURN.)
Faulty Diagnosis. Truth. July 12, '22. (92:83.)
DANE, CLEMENCE.
Dearly Beloved of Benjamin Cobb. Nash. April. (37.)
DAVEY, NORMAN.
*Sindbad of "Sunny Lea." John. Sept. 9, '22. (7:689.)
DE LA MARE, WALTER.
Tree. L. Merc. Oct., '22. (6:577.); Cen. Aug., '22. (1 4:483.)
DIGBY, BASSETT.
Sad End of Goldminer, the Slowest Horse In the World. New S. Sept. 23, '22. (19:660.)
EASTON, DOROTHY.
Little Pig. West. Aug. 12, '22. (16.)
GALSWORTHY, JOHN.
Blackmail. Pears' A. (2.); Met. Jan. (28.)
Conscience. Sat. R. Jan. 6. (135:20.); Red Bk. Feb (60.)
Long Ago Affair. Cas. W. April 4. (1:81.); Del. May. (11.)
Philanthropy. Sat. R. March 31. (135:431.)
Stroke of Lightning. Red Bk. Nov., '22. (31.)
Virtue. Eng. R. Feb. (36:106.); Met. Feb.-March. (16.)
GEORGE, W. L.
*Death of the Jester. Cen. Oct., '22. (104:865.)
Green Parrot. Wind. May. (641.)
Postman of Cotterbury. Hut. Jan. (8:12.)
Spin of the Wheel. Eve. March 7. (12:303.)
Waxworks. Str. July, '22. (64:58.)

GIBBON, PERCEVAL.
By Consent. Pearson (London). Oct., '22. (293.); Red Bk. Aug., '22. (98.)
Man of Principle. Roy. Nov., '22. (18.)
Misadventure. Pearson (London). Feb. (165.); Chic. Trib. April 15.
GIBBS, SIR PHILIP.
Beggar of Berlin. Sto. Jan. (411.); S. E. P. Dec. 9, '22. (14.)
Visions of Yvonne. Sto. May. (201.)
GOLDING, LOUIS.
Sons of George Teasle. Sat. R. Sept. 9, '22. (134:382.)
HASTINGS, BASIL MACDONALD.
"That's For Remembrance." Gra. July 1, '22. (106:22.)
"HAY, IAN." (JOHN HAY BEITH.)
"Liberry." Str. Oct., '22. (64:293.); L. H. J. Oct., '22. (14.)
HEWITT, LEWEN.
Napkin. Pan. Nov., '22. (8:103.)
HEWLETT, MAURICE.
Birth of Roland. L. Merc. Dec., '22. (7:149.)
Cuckoo. Gra. Nov. 27, '22. (8.) L. H. J. Nov., '22. (18.)
HICHENS, ROBERT.
Villa by the Sea. Hut. Aug., '22. (7:158.)
HILTON, JAMES.
Old Harkaway. Man. G. Nov. 27, '22. (12.)
HOLME, CONSTANCE.
Gold Watch. West. July 1, '22. (16.); July 8, '22. (16.)
HUGHES, RICHARD.
*Stranger. West. May 26. (15.)
HUTCHINSON, A. S. M.
Return of the Swordsman. Hear. Nov., '22. (16.)
Rough Little Girl and the Smooth Little Girl. Str. Dec., 22. (64:489.); L. H. J. Dec., '22. (8.)
*Some Talk of Alexander. Sphere. Nov., '22. (3.)
HUXLEY, ALDOUS.
Good and Old-Fashioned. Sphere. Dec. 23, '22. (91:310.)
JACOBS, WILLIAM WYMARK.
His Brother's Keeper. Sto. Dec., '22. (64:561.)
JESSE, F. TENNYSON. (MRS. HARWOOD.)
*Comfort. Lon. Dec., '22. (49:383.)
Courage. Lon. Nov., '22. (49:275.)
Luck. Lon. Sept., '22. (49:9.)
KAYE-SMITH, SHEILA.
*Old Gadgett. Cas. W. March 21. (1:9.); Harp. M. Aug., '22. (145:342.)
"Where the Unchanging Meadows Are" Roy. Dec., '22. (131.)
KIDDY, MAURICE.
Powers of Darkness. Roy. Nov. '22. (50.)
KNOX, EDMUND GEORGE VALPY.
Useless Umbrellas. Daily News. April 13.

LAVRIN, JANKO.
Gargoyle. New A. Sept. 28, '22. (31:272.)
LAWRENCE, DAVID HERBERT.
Monkey-Nuts. Sov. Aug., '22. (5:229.)
LYONS, A. NEIL.
"Please, Sir, the Plumber!" Str. March. (65:272.)
MCGRADY, S. H.
Reunion. Eng. R. July, '22. (35:38.)
MCKENNA, STEPHEN.
Myrtle. Pears' A. (5.)
MACKENZIE, COMPTON.
Never Say Die. Sto. July, '22. (433.)
"MALET, LUCAS." (MRS. MARY ST. LEGER HARRISON.)
Conversion. W. F. Aug., '22. (64.)
On the Boat-Deck. Sto. Sept., '22. (755.)
MANNING-SANDERS, GEORGE.
Brethren. Eng. R. April. (36:331.)
MANSFIELD, KATHERINE. (MRS. J. MIDDLETON MURRY.)
Canary. Nat. (London). April 21. (33:84.)
Cup of Tea. Cas. W. April 11. (1:115.)
*Fly. Cen. Sept., '22. (104:743.)
Married Man's Story. L. Merc. April. (7:577.); Dial, May. (74:451.)
Six Years After. Nat. (London). April 28. (33:114); New R. March 28. (34:129.)
MARSHALL, ARCHIBALD.
Oakfield House. L. Merc. Feb. (7:364.)
MAUGHAM, WILLIAM SOMERSET.
Bewitched. Hear. Feb. (29.)
Mr. Pete. Sat. R. July 8, '22. (134:70.)
Princess and the Nightingale. Pearson (London). Dec., '22. (505.) G. H. Dec., '22. (33.)
*Taipan. Pearson (London). Oct., '22. (320.)
Vice-Consul. Sat. R. July 8, '22. (134:71.)
MAYNE, ETHEL COLBURN.
Black Magic. West. March 31. (16.)
*Stripes. G. Hind. Oct., '22. (1:31.)
MERRICK, LEONARD.
Poet of the Heavenly Cook. Nash. April. (16.); Hear. Jan. (20.)
MONTAGUE, CHARLES EDWARD.
*Another Temple Gone. L. Merc. Dec., '22. (7:132.)
MORDAUNT, ELINOR.
Heart of a Ship. Met. July, '22. (16.)
*Inspired 'Busman. Sat. R. July 1, '22. (134:22.)
Shut Windows. Hut. July, '22. (7:10.)
NIXON, GEORGE W.
Escape. Truth. Aug. 2, '22. (92:212.)
O'FLAHERTY, LIAM.
*Sniper. New L. Jan. 12. (10.)
ORIEL, ANTRIM.
Bottle of Hock. New A. Oct. 12, '22. (31:301.)

PENNINGTON, E.
Fame. New S. Aug. 26, '22. (19:560.)
PERTWEE, ROLAND.
Independence. Pearson (London). Oct., '22. (329.)
Onward Years. Str. April. (65:375.); S. E. P. March 10. (16.)
Summer Time. L. H. J. Sept., '22. (15.)
PUCH, EDWIN.
*Contrairy Mary. Eng. R. Jan. (36:53.)
QUILLER-COUCH, SIR ARTHUR T.
*Mayor's Dovecote. Cas. Winter A. (92.)
RICHARDSON, ANTHONY.
Green Eyes. New A. Nov. 9, '22. (32:24.); Nov. 16, '22. (32:39.)
Odd Man Out. New A. Nov. 23, '22. (32:57.); Nov. 30, '22. (32:72.)
SALMON, ARTHUR L.
Payment. Colour. July-Aug., '22. (17:8.)
SIEVEKING, L. DE GIBERNE.
*Prophetic Camera. Eng. R. Nov., '22. (35:399.); Str. Feb. (65:163.)
SINCLAIR, MAY.
Nature of the Evidence. Fort. R. May. (871.)
Victim. Cri. Oct., '22. (65.)
Where Their Fire Is Not Quenched. Eng. R. Oct., '22. (35:299.)
SITWELL, OSBERT.
*Machine Breaks Down. Eng. R. Dec., '22. (35:493.)
"STERN, G. B." (MRS. GEOFFREY LISLE HOLDSWORTH.)
Finessing the Knave. Sketch. May 30. (424.)
Leading Lady! Sketch. July 12, '22. (68.)
SUTTON, GRAHAM.
Ambition. Sat. R. Oct. 21, '22. (134:590.)
WALPOLE, HUGH SEYMOUR.
Chinese Horses. Str. Dec.., '22. (64:582.)
*Enemy. Str. Feb. (65:175.); Met. May. (19.)
Guest. Lon. Feb. (49:605.)
Little Ghost. Red Bk. Oct. '22. (48.)
WEBB, MARY.
*Blessed Are the Meek. Eng. R. Sept., '22. (35:210.)
WETJEN, ALBERT RICHARD.
Sea King. Sto. Nov., '22. (208.)
WILLCOCKS, MARY PATRICIA.
Comforting of Jules le Quentel. Hut. Oct., '22. (7:394.)
WILLIAMS, ORLO.
Convex Mirror. Corn. Oct., '22. (316:444.)
West Window and the Screen. Corn. Sept., '22. (315:297.)
WOOLF, VIRGINIA.
In the Orchard. Cri. April. (243.)
YOUNG, FRANCIS BRETT.
Message. L. Merc. Jan. (7:246.)

# ARTICLES ON THE SHORT STORY IN BRITISH PERIODICALS

## JULY 1, 1922, TO MAY 31, 1923

NOTE. *Capital Letters are employed to indicate the author of an article.*

American Short Story.
Anonymous, Times Lit. Suppl. April 19. (22:264.)
By Gerald Gould. Sat. R. April 28. (572.)
Anderson, Sherwood.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. July 13, '22. (21:457.)
By Forrest Reid. Nat. (London) July 8, '22. (31:510.)
By Rebecca West. New S. July 22, '22. (19:448.)
Andreyev, Leonid.
By Sylvia Lynd. Time. Jan. 19. (57.)
By Raymond Mortimer. New S. Feb. 24. (20:602.)
By J. Middleton Murry. Nat. (London). Jan. 13. (32:582.)
B., A. A.
Robert Louis Stevenson. Corn. Feb. (54:9.)
Balzac, Honoré de.
By Ernst Robert Curtius. Cri. Jan. (1:127.)
Beadle, Charles.
By Gerald Gould. Sat. R. Aug. 26, '22. (321.)
Bibesco, Elizabeth.
By Gerald Gould. Sat. R. Jan. 27. (116.)
By Raymond Mortimer. New S. Dec. 30, '22. (20:383.)
BIRYUKOV, PAUL.
Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoi. John. March 24. (976.); March 31. (916.)
BLUNDEN, EDMUND.
C. E. Montague. Nat. (London). Feb. 24. (32:788.)
Bowen, Elizabeth.
By Raymond Mortimer. New S. May 26. (21:201.)
BOWEN, MARJORIE.
Denis Diderot. Cas. W. May 26. (1:354.)
Bramah, Ernest.
By Desmond MacCarthy. New S. Dec. 30, '22. (20:382.)
By Helen Waddell. Nat. (London) Dec. 9, '22. (32:398.)
Brighouse, Harold.
By Gerald Gould. Sat. R. March 31. (439.)
British Short Story.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. July 6, '22. (21:440.)
By Gerald Gould. St. R. Feb. 10. (190.)
By J. Middleton Murry. Nat. (London) Aug. 26, '22. (31:712.)
By Edward Shanks. L. Merc. March. (7:545.)

Brocchi, Virgilio.
By L. Collis Morley. Nat. (London) Sept. 9, '22. (31:773.)
Brock, A. Clutton.
W. H. Hudson. Times Lit. Suppl. Aug. 24, '22. (21:542.)
Candler, Edmund.
Sita and Santa Chatterjee. Nat. (London) March 17. (32:922.)
Cather, Willa.
By J. Middleton Murry. Nat. (London) April 14. (33:54.)
Chatterjee, Sita and Santa.
By Edmund Candler. Nat. (London) March 17. (32:922.)
Chesterton, G. K.
Anonymous. New S. Dec. 30, '22. (20:388.)
Claxton, A. E.
Robert Louis Stevenson. Cham. Oct., '22. (627.)
Collis-Morley, L.
Virgilio Brocchi. Nat. (London) Sept. 9, '22. (31:773.)
Ada Negri. Nat. (London) May 19. (33:229.)
Luigi Pirandello. Nat. (London) Sept. 9, '22. (31:773.)
Curtius, Ernst Robert.
Honoré de Balzac. Cri. Jan. (1:127.)
Dark, Sidney.
Richard Middleton. John. July 22, '22. (485.)
De La Mare, Walter.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. May 17. (22:337.)
By Forrest Reid. West. May 19. (17.)
Diderot, Denis.
By Marjorie Bowen. Cas. W. May 26. (1:354.)
Dostoevsky, Fyodor.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Nov. 2, '22. (21:702.)
By S. S. Koteliansky. Cri. April. (1:217.)
By Owen Meredith. New S. March 17. (20:viii.)
By J. Middleton Murry. Nat. (London) Dec. 2, '22. (32:357.)
Dowson, Ernest.
By Horace Annesley Vachell. Cas. W. March 21. (16.)
Edwards, J. Hugh.
Caradoc Evans. John. March 24. (899.)
Evans, Caradoc.
By J. Hugh Edwards. John. March 24. (899.)
Ferber, Edna.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. April 19. (22:264.)
Fish, Arthur.
Oscar Wilde. Cas. W. May 2. (1:215.)
Fitzgerald, F. Scott.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. April 19. (22:264.)
By Gerald Gould. Sat. R. April 7. (469.)
Flaubert, Gustave.
By J. Middleton Murry. Nat. (London) April 21. (33:85.)
By Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson. Cri. Jan. (1:105.)
By Hugh Stokes. Queen. Oct. 21, '22. (512.)
Fraser, Brodie.
Robert Louis Stevenson. Cas. W. May 9. (1:254.)

Garland, Hamlin.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Aug. 31, '22. (21:554.)
Ghost Stories.
By Joseph Shearing. Cas. W. April 25. (1:208.)
Gissing, George.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Oct. 12, '22. (21:645.)
Gobineau, Arthur de.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Oct. 12, '22. (21:642.)
Goldenveizer, A. B.
Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoi. Cas. W. April 18. (1:147); April 25. (1:187.)
Gould, Gerald.
American Short Story. Sat. R. April 28. (572.)
Charles Beadle. Sat. R. Aug. 26, '22. (321.)
Best Short Stories of 1922.—English. Sat. R. Feb. 10. (190.)
Elizabeth Bibesco. Sat. R. Jan. 27. (116.)
Harold Brighouse. Sat. R. March 31. (439.)
F. Scott Fitzgerald. Sat. R. April 7. (469.)
Sir Harry Johnston. Sat. R. Feb. 10. (190.)
D. H. Lawrence. Sat. R. March 31. (439.)
R. Ellis Roberts. Sat. R. Feb. 10. (190.)
Olive Schreiner. Sat. R. Feb. 10. (190.)
H. de Vere Stacpoole. Sat. R. March 31. (439.)
Anzia Yezierska. Sat. R. Aug. 26, '22. (321.)
H., L. P.
O. Henry. New S. Dec. 16, '22. (20:336.)
Hackett, Francis.
Mark Twain. Nat. (London) Dec. 2, '22. (32:356.)
Harmsworth, Cecil.
Stephen Reynolds. Nat. (London) May 19. (32:244.)
Harraden, Beatrice.
Olive Schreiner. Time. March 16. (291.)
Hémon, Louis.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. April 19. (22:263.)
Henry, O.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Nov. 2, '22. (21:699.)
By L. P. H. New S. Dec. 16, '22. (20:336.)
Hornung, E. W.
By Edward Shanks. Queen. May 24. (153:708.)
Hudson, W. H.
By A. Clutton Brock. Times Lit. Suppl. Aug. 24, '22. (21:542.)
By H. J. Massingham. Nat. (London) Aug. 26, '22. (31:708.)
Huxley, Aldous.
By Leonard Woolf. Nat. (London) May 12. (33:196.)
Italian Novella.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Sept. 7, '22. (21:566.)
James, Henry.
By Henry James. L. Merc. Sept., '22. (6:492.)
By Desmond MacCarthy. New S. Oct. 7, '22. (20:15.)

Johnston, Sir Harry.
By Gerald Gould. Sat. R. Feb. 10. (190.)
By Raymond Mortimer. New S. Feb. 10. (20:543.)
Kipling, Rudyard.
By Edward Shanks. Queen. Oct. 7, '22. (434.)
By Edward Shanks. L. Merc. Jan. (7:273.)
Koteliansky, S. S.
Fyodor Dostoevsky. Cri. April. (1:217.)
Lawrence, D. H.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. March 22. (22:195.)
By Gerald Gould. Sat. R. March 31. (439.)
By Raymond Mortimer. New S. March 31. (20:752.)
London, Jack.
By Russell Stannard. John. March 3. (774.)
Lyeskov, Nicolai.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Jan. 11. (22:25.)
Lynd, Sylvia.
Leonid Andreyev. Time. Jan. 19. (57.)
Katherine Mansfield. West. Jan. 20. (12.)
Ethel Colburn Mayne. Time. Feb. 16. (181.)
C. E. Montague. Time. Feb. 16. (181.)
MacCarthy, Desmond.
Ernest Bramah. New S. Dec. 30, '22. (20:382.)
Henry James. New S. Oct. 7, '22. (20:15.)
George Moore. New S. Sept. 2, '22. (19:587.)
Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoi. New S. July 15, '22. (19:417.)
Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoi. New S. May 19. (21:173.)
Mansfield, Katherine.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. July 27, '22.
By Sylvia Lynd. West. Jan. 20. (12.)
By H. M. Tomlinson. Nat. (London) Jan. 20. (32:609.)
Massingham, H. J.
W. H. Hudson. Nat. (London) Aug. 26, '22. (31:708.)
Massingham, H. W.
Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoi. Nat. (London). Dec. 23, '22. (32:492.)
Maupassant, Guy de.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Jan. 25. (22:57.)
Mayne, Ethel Colburn.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Feb. 15. (22:105.)
By Sylvia Lynd. Time. Feb. 16. (181.)
Meredith, Owen.
Fyodor Dostoevsky. New S. March 17. (20:viii.)
Méry, Joseph.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Nov. 2, '22. (21:700.)
Middleton, Richard.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. July 20, '22. (21:472.)
Anonymous. Nat. (London). Oct. 7, '22. (32:23.)
By Sidney Dark. John. July 22, '22. (485.)
By E. R. New S. Sept. 9, '22. (19:613.)

Montague, C. E.
By Edmund Blunden. Nat. (London) Feb. 24. (32:788.)
By Sylvia Lynd. Time. Feb. 16. (181.)
By Raymond Mortimer. New S. Feb. 24. (20:602.)
Moore, George.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Oct. 5, '22. (21:621.)
By Desmond MacCarthy. New S. Sept. 2, '22. (19:587.)
By Alec Waugh. John. Aug. 19, '22. (7:602.)
Morand, Paul.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. April 19. (22:263.)
By Raymond Mortimer. New S. April 14. (21:17.)
Mortimer, Raymond.
Leonid Andreyev. New S. Feb. 24. (20:602.)
Elizabeth Bibesco. New S. Feb. 24. (20:383.)
Elizabeth Bowen. New S. May 26. (21:201.)
Sir Harry Johnston. New S. Feb. 10. (20:543.)
D. H. Lawrence. New S. March 31. (20:752.)
C. E. Montague. New S. Feb. 24. (20:602.)
Paul Morand. New S. April 14. (21:17.)
Murry, J. Middleton.
Leonid Andreyev. Nat. (London) Jan. 13. (32:582.)
British Short Story. Nat. (London) Aug. 26, '22. (31:712.)
Willa Cather. Nat. (London) April 14. (33:54.)
Fyodor Dostoevsky. Nat. (London) Dec. 2, '22. (32:357.)
Gustave Flaubert. Nat. (London) April 21. (33:85.)
Negri, Ada.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. March 29. (22:212.)
By L. Collis-Morley. Nat. (London) May 19. (33:229.)
Nichols, Robert.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. May 17. (22:337.)
O'Conaire, Pádraic.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Feb. 1. (22:75.)
Pirandello, Luigi.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Nov. 30, '22. (21:782.)
By L. Collis-Morley. Nat. (London) Sept. 9, '22. (31:773.)
By Mario Praz. L. Merc. Sept., '22. (6:535.)
Powys, T. F.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. May 24. (22:352.)
Praz, Mario.
Luigi Pirandello. L. Merc. Sept., '22. (6:535.)
Queiroz, Eca de.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Jan. 25. (22:58.)
R. E.
Richard Middleton. New S. Sept. 9, '22. (19:613.)
Reid, Forrest.
Sherwood Anderson. Nat. (London) July 8, '22. (31:510.)
Walter De La Mare. West. May 19. (17.)
Reynolds, Stephen.
By Cecil Harmsworth. Nat. (London) May 19. (33:244.)
Roberts, R. Ellis.
By Gerald Gould. Sat. R. Feb. 10. (190.)

ROBERTS, R. ELLIS.
Mark Twain. New S. Oct. 28, '22. (20:112.)
ROBERTSON, RT. HON. J. M.
Gustave Flaubert. Cri. Jan. (1:105.)
RUSSELL, BERTRAND.
Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoi. New S. Jan. 20. (20:457.)
Schreiner, Olive.
By Gerald Gould. Sat. R. Feb. 10. (190.)
By Beatrice Harraden. Time. March 16. (291.)
SHANKS, EDWARD.
British Short Story. L. Merc. March. (7:545.)
E. W. Hornung. Queen. May 24. (153:708.)
Rudyard Kipling. L. Merc. Jan. (7:273.)
Rudyard Kipling. Queen. Oct. 7, '22. (434.)
Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoi. Queen. Feb. 22. (236.)
SHEARING, JOSEPH.
Ghost Stories. Cas. W. April 25. (1:208.)
Short Story.
By H. M. Tomlinson. Nat. (London) Dec. 16, '22. (32:459.)
Somaré Enrico.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Aug. 24, '22. (21:544.)
Stacpoole, H. de Vere.
By Gerald Gould. Sat. R. March 31. (439.)
STANNARD, RUSSELL.
Jack London. John. March 3. (774.)
Stevenson, Robert Louis.
By A. A. B. Corn. Feb. (54:9.)
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Nov. 30, '22. (21:777.)
By A. E. Claxton. Cham. Oct., '22. (627.)
By Brodie Fraser. Cas. W. May 9. (1:254.)
By S. J. Whitmee. Cas. W. March 28. (1:66.)
STOKES, HUGH.
Gustave Flaubert. Queen. Oct. 21, '22. (512.)
Tolstoi, Leo Nikolaevich.
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. July 13, '22. (21:456.)
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Jan. 11. (22:20.)
By Paul Biryukov. John. March 24. (876.); March 31. (916.)
By A. B. Goldenveizer. Cas. W. April 18. (1:147.); April 25. (1:187.)
By Desmond MacCarthy. New S. July 15, '22. (19:417.)
By Desmond MacCarthy. New S. May 19. (21:173.)
By H. W. Massingham. Nat. (London) Dec. 23, '22. (32:492.)
By Bertrand Russell. New S. Jan. 20. (20:457.)
By Edward Shanks. Queen. Feb. 22. (236.)
TOMLINSON, H. M.
Katherine Mansfield. Nat. (London) Jan. 20. (32:609.)
Short Story. Nat. (London) Dec. 16, '22. (32:459.)
"Twain, Mark."
Anonymous. Times Lit. Suppl. Oct. 26, '22. (21:678.)
By Francis Hackett. Nat. (London) Dec. 2, '22. (32:356.)
By R. Ellis Roberts. New S. Oct. 28, '22. (20:112.)

VACHELL, HORACE ANNESLEY.
Ernest Dowson. Cas. W. March 21. (16.)
Villiers de L'Isle Adam.
By Arnold Whitridge. Corn. Sept., '22. (53:340.)
WADDELL, HELEN.
Ernest Bramah. Nat. (London) Dec. 9, '22. (32:398.)
WAUGH, ALEC.
George Moore. John. Aug. 19, '22. (7:602.)
WEST, REBECCA.
Sherwood Anderson. New S. July 22, '22. (19:443.)
WHITMEE, S. J.
Robert Louis Stevenson. Cas. W. March 28. (66.)
WHITREDGE, ARNOLD.
Villiers de L'Isle Adam. Corn. Sept., '22. (53:340.)
Wilde, Oscar.
By Arthur Fish. Cas. W. May 2. (1:215.)
WOOLF, LEONARD.
Aldous Huxley. Nat. (London) May 12. (33:196.)
Yezierska, Anzia.
By Gerald Gould. Sat. R. Aug. 26., '22. (321.)

# VOLUMES OF SHORT STORIES PUBLISHED IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

## JULY 1, 1922 TO MAY 31, 1923

NOTE. *An asterisk before a title indicates distinction. The name of the American publisher follows in parentheses.*

### I. ENGLISH AUTHORS

ADCOCK, A. ST. JOHN. With the Gilt Off. A. M. Philpot.
ASHBY, PHILIP. Mad Rani. Routledge.
AUSTIN, F. BRITTEN. On the Borderland. Hurst and Blackett.
AYRES, RUBY M. Our Avenue. Pearson.
"BARTIMEUS." Seaways. Cassell.
BIBESCO, ELIZABETH. *Balloons. Hurst and Blackett. (Doran.)
BOTTOME, PHYLLIS. *Derelict. Collins. (Century.)
BOWEN, ELIZABETH. *Encounters. Sidgwick and Jackson.
BRAMAH, ERNEST. *Kai Lung's Golden Hours. Richards. (Doran.)
BREBNER, PERCY JAMES. Master Detective. Holden and Hardingham.
BRETON, THOMAS LE. Confessions of Mrs. May Jenkins.
BUTTS, MARY. *Speed the Plough. Chapman and Hall.
CASTLE, AGNES *and* EGERTON. Minuet and Fox Trot. Hutchinson.
CHAPMAN, WILLIAM GERARD. Green Timber Trails. Parsons.
CHESTERTON, G. K. *Man Who Knew Too Much. Cassell. (Harper.)
CROMPTON, RICHMAL. Just William. Newnes.
More William. Newnes.
DE LA MARE, WALTER. *Riddle. Selwyn and Blount. (Knopf.)
DOYLE, LYNN. Lobster Salad. Duckworth.
DUDENEY, MRS. HENRY. *Baker's Dozen. Heinemann.
EYTON, JOHN. Dancing Fakir. Longmans. (Longmans, Green.)
FRANKAU, GILBERT. Men, Maids, and Mustard-Pot. Hutchinson.
FREEMAN, R. AUSTIN. Dr. Thorndyke's Case-Book. Hodder and Stoughton.
GRAND, SARAH. Variety. Heinemann.
GRAY, MAXWELL. Bit of Blue Stone. Hutchinson.
GRIMSHAW, BEATRICE. Valley of Never-Come-Back. Hurst and Blackett.
HARVEY, T. EDMUND. Stolen Aureoles. Blackwell.
"HAY, IAN." Lucky Number. Hodder and Stoughton. (Houghton & Mifflin.)
HEILGERS, LOUISE. Love and Life. Palmer.
HORNUNG, E. W. Old Offenders. Murray.
HOWARD, FRANCIS MORTON. 'Orace and Co. Methuen.

JACOB, VIOLET. Tales of My Own Country. Murray.
KELLEHER, D. L. Lovelights of Ireland. Talbot Press.
KINCAID, C. A. Anchorite. Milford.
KINROSS, ALBERT. *Truth About Vignolles. Duckworth. (Century.)
LAWRENCE, D. H. *Ladybird. Secker. (The Captain's Doll. Seltzer.)
LE QUEUX, WILLIAM. Tracked by Wireless. Paul.
LUCAS, E. V. You Know What People Are. Methuen.
LYONS, A. NEIL. *Fifty-Fifty. Butterworth.
MCKEON, J. F. Paper of Murty Oge. O'Connor.
MAYNE, ETHEL COLBURN. *Nine of Hearts. Constable.
MERRICK, LEONARD. *To Tell You the Truth. Hodder and Stoughton. (Dutton.)
MILLS, ARTHUR. Primrose Path. Duckworth.
MONTAGUE, C. E. *Fiery Particles. Chatto and Windus. (Doubleday, Page.)
MUNRO, NEIL. *Jaunty Jock. Blackwood.
*Lost Pibroch. Blackwood.
NESBIT, E. To the Adventurous. Hutchinson.
NETHERSOLE, S. C. Time o' Lilacs. Mills and Boon.
NEVINSON, MARGARET WYNNE. Fragments of Life. Allen and Unwin.
NICHOLS, ROBERT. *Fantastica. Chatto and Windus.
NUN OF TYBURN CONVENT. Anchoress's Window. Sands.
O'BRIEN, EDWARD *and* COURNOS, JOHN. *editors.* Best Short Stories of 1922. I. English. Cape. (Small, Maynard.)
OLIVER, NICHOLAS. Sou'westers. Allenson.
ORME, ROWAN. Burdens. Macdonald.
PALMER, ARNOLD. *Tales Without Morals. Selwyn and Blount.
PHILLPOTTS, EDEN. *Black, White, and Brindled. Richards. (Macmillan.)
PICKTHALL, MARMADUKE. *As Others See Us. Collins.
POWYS, T. F. *Left Leg. Chatto and Windus.
"RITA." Conjugal Rights. Hutchinson.
ROBERTS, R. ELLIS. Other End. Palmer.
ROBEY, GEORGE. Lady In Question. Nash.
ST. JOHN-LOE, GLADYS. Dust of the Dawn. Duckworth.
SCHREINER, OLIVE. *Stories, Dreams, and Allegories. Unwin. (Stokes.)
STOCK, RALPH. South of the Line. Heinemann.
TALLENTS, STEPHEN. Dancer. Constable.
"TRINDA." Will You Read This? Duckworth.
WATSON, BASIL. About Life. Duckworth.
WEBSTER, F. A. M. Curse of the Lion. United Press.
Old Ebbie. Chapman and Hall.
WILLIAMSON, C. N. *and* A. M. Fortune Hunters. Mills and Boon.
WODEHOUSE, P. G. Inimitable Jeeves. Herbert Jenkins.
WOOD, FRANCIS MARIOTT. Tales of the Polden Hills. Somerset Folk Press.
WYLLARDE, DOLF. Our Earth Here. Hutchinson.

### II. American and Canadian Authors

Bacon, Josephine Daskam. Blind Cupid. Appleton. (Appleton.)
Beaumont, Gerald. Riders Up! Appleton. (Appleton.)
Child, Richard Washburn. Velvet Black. Hodder and Stoughton. (Dutton.)
Colcord, Lincoln. *Under Sail. Nash. (An Instrument of the Gods. Macmillan.)
Connell, Richard. Mr. Braddy's Bottle. Chapman and Dodd. (Doran.)
Ferber, Edna. Among Those Present. Nash. (Doubleday, Page.)
Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *Tales of the Jazz Age. Collins. (Scribner.)
Gale, Zona. Friendship Village. Hodder and Stoughton.
Peace In Friendship Village. Hodder and Stoughton.
Harte, Bret. *Bohemian Papers. Chatto and Windus.
James, Henry. *Altar of the Dead. Macmillan.
*Author of Beltraffio. Macmillan.
*Daisy Miller. Macmillan.
*Diary of a Man of Fifty. Macmillan.
*Last of the Valerii. Macmillan.
*Lesson of the Master. Macmillan.
*Lord Beaupré. Macmillan.
*Sacred Fount. Macmillan.
*Watch and Ward. Macmillan.
Kyne, Peter B. Cappy Ricks Retires. Hodder and Stoughton. (Cosmopolitan Book Corporation.)
Melville, Herman. *Apple-Tree Table. Oxford University Press. (Princeton University Press.)
*Piazza Tales. Constable. (Gabriel Wells.)
Merwin, Samuel. Temperamental Henry. Allen and Unwin. (Bobbs-Merrill.)
Norris, Frank. Third Circle. John Lane.
O'Brien, Edward. *editor.* Best Short Stories of 1922. II. American. Cape. (Small, Maynard.)
Wallace, Frederick William. Salt Seas and Sailormen. Hodder and Stoughton.
Shack Locker. Hodder and Stoughton.

### III. Translations

Hallstrom, Per. *Selected Stories. Oxford University Press. (American Scandinavian Foundation.)
Lagerlof, Selma. *Tale of a Manor. Laurie.
Leblanc, Maurice. Eight Strokes of the Clock. Cassell. (Macauley.)
Lyeskov, Nicolai. *Sentry. Lane.
Macklin, Alys Eyre. *editor.* Five Striking Stories. A. M. Philpot.
Maupassant, Guy de. *Doctor Heraclius Gloss. Brentano's. (Brentano's.)
Tchekov, Anton. *Love. Chatto and Windus. (Macmillan.)

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